

THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER 1892.

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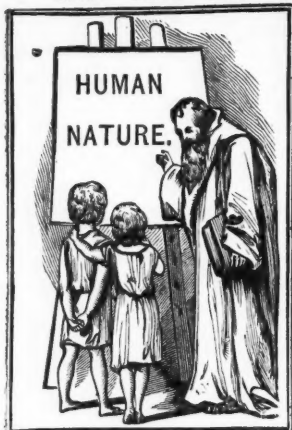
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MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

BY S. BARING-GOULD,

AUTHOR OF 'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FOURTEENTH.

'DRUMDUSKIE! Is it not sweet?'

'What is sweet, my love?'

'What is sweet? Why, what else can I mean, what else can I be thinking of, but that Rose is going to become Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven?'

'Is it settled?' asked Mr. Boxholder.

'Settled! No, not exactly that. But everything is on the high road to a settlement. Mr. Percival has arrived, and is staying at the Railway Hotel. I invited him to be our guest, but he declined. I can understand his delicacy.'

'But, surely, Isabella—because Mr. Jack This or Mr. Tom That is put up at the Railway Hotel, that does not constitute him our son-in-law.'

Mrs. Boxholder turned a stony eye on her husband, and he shrank under her petrifying stare.

'Upon my word, Drumduskie, you forget your manners! Do you know whom you are addressing?'

After holding him with her eye in speechless collapse for a minute, she sighed: 'Well, one cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. I suppose a good deal of inherent barbarism remains in the Scottish blood. I will pass this over and answer your question. Mr. Percival Curgenven is here, and the purpose of his

coming all the way from Cornwall has been communicated to me by Jane. He told her that he came here to seek a wife.'

'He's a little, a—I mean a wee bit old for Rose,' said Mr. Boxholder timidly, holding the mantelshelf.

'Not a bit. The match is suitable in every way. He is, I do allow, a little cubbish—has, in spite of his age, never grown quite out of cubdom; he has, I believe, tumbled about a long time in the backwoods, or the bush, or jungle, or somewhere of the sort; but if ever there were a girl calculated to bring such a man to order and trim him into shape, it is my child. What a nose she has!'

'Yes, she has a nose.'

'I mean such character in it.'

'Yes, dear, I suppose so, a great deal of character in her nose.'

'And breeding,' added Mrs. Boxholder.

'No doubt, darling. Plenty of breeding in her nose.'

'She will look, every inch, the squiress of Curgenvén. No one could have been found more suitable to succeed Jane. She also had a nose.'

'Of course she had, my sweet.'

'I mean a Pamphlet nose.'

Mrs. Boxholder lighted a spill at the fire and applied the flame to the candles. 'I hear wheels,' she said. 'It is those McGruffs, always either half an hour too soon or half an hour too late.'

Mr. and Mrs. Boxholder were in evening dress; the lady in mauve silk and darker velvet, with lace and diamonds, not many diamonds, nor fine, but some. She had not found that there was jewelry among the heirlooms of the MacNaughts of Drumduskie, so she had obliged her husband to give her some. 'It was incumbent on the MacNaught to have his wife adorned in a manner suitable to her position,' she had said. 'It is the McGruffs,' said Mrs. Boxholder. 'Now, Drumduskie, mind Rose is to have a proper dower. What are you going to give her? She shall not be sent off like a beggar.'

'My dear, upon my word, I have not considered.'

'Then the sooner you consider the better. Mr. Percival proposes to-night. You shall not go to sleep till you have decided what to give her; and mind, I'll pull your pillow from under your head and throw it across the room if the sum you propose does not seem reasonable to me.'

‘I’ll do my best, my darling, I will indeed. But here come the McGruffs. Where is the list of those who are to take in whom?’

‘It will come right. I have not made out the list. I’ll settle it; and, look here, no sneaking off to the smoking-room with one or two chums, and leaving me to entertain the rest.’ Then: ‘How do you do, dear Mrs. McGruff? So delighted to see you.’

Mr. Percival Curgenven was, in fact, at Drumduskie, and had called that afternoon, when Mrs. Boxholder had invited him to dinner. As it happened, she had a pleasant little party assembling that evening at her house, and she would be charmed if Mr. Percival would make one of the guests. He had accepted. Mrs. Boxholder had no doubt whatever as to his intentions, because Mrs. Jane Curgenven had had no doubt whatever.

Percival had met Mrs. Boxholder and her eldest daughter Rose more than once at Curgenven when they were staying there. Last summer he had been a guest in the house at the same time. Percival had amused himself with playful passages of arms with Miss Boxholder. She was a prim and rigid old young woman, and he had found entertainment in startling her and disturbing her gravity. Rose did not care for him, had not given him a thought, save as a scatterbrained, half-wild Curgenven cousin. Now she was quite unprepared by her mother for receiving him as a suitor. But Mrs. Boxholder knew her daughter, and was well aware that she would decide in accordance with prudence. She was not the young lady to let slip four thousand per annum for such a trifle as the encumbrance of a man for whom she did not care.

The guests arrived, mainly together, about twelve minutes after the McGruffs. Then Mrs. Boxholder was greatly taken up with receiving them, and whisking about, informing the gentlemen whom they were to escort into dinner. She acted on her husband much as a little whirlwind on a feather, pursuing it, spinning it, driving it from place to place.

‘Drumduskie, you take in Lady Duff-Duff. Now mind you carve the goose, and remember that there is stuffing.’

When she had revolved into another corner of the drawing-room she caught him again, and said in an undertone: ‘Remember; over the wine no London shop talk.’ Then, coming on Mr. Percival: ‘Ah, Mr. Curgenven, how good of you to come to

us North Britons from delightful Cornwall! You will take in my daughter Rose, and don't squabble, as you used to at dear Curgenven.' Presently she swept across the drawing-room towards Mr. Boxholder, who had got to the other side of the room, as he usually did. 'Now, really, haven't you heard the butler announce that dinner is ready? Do, for pity's sake, take in Lady Duff-Duff.'

'My dear, I am looking for her.'

'You won't find her in a corner. She is on the sofa, there behind the cushion,' pointing to a diminutive old lady who sat in a little heap, and was the most untidily and incongruously dressed person in the room.

After Mr. Boxholder had offered his arm to this lady all the rest followed, and the hostess brought up the rear with Sir Archibald Duff-Duff.

'Dear me!' exclaimed Mrs. Boxholder. 'I'm so sorry, Mr. West, that you have no partner. It is most unfortunate; I am heartbroken.' This to a solitary gentleman. In fact, the party had been made up before the invitation of Mr. Percival Curgenven, so that Mr. West's partner had been consigned to someone else.

But no sooner was grace said, and all were seated, than Mrs. Boxholder started to her feet with an exclamation of dismay that created a dead silence.

'Goodness me!' she said; 'we are thirteen.'

'Well,' responded Mr. Boxholder from the further end of the table, 'and what of that, my dear?'

'Why, Drumduskie, we cannot sit down thirteen to table.'

'Why not? It won't hurt us.'

'My dear, it is not possible. We are in Scotland, and must be superstitious. You forget. Thirteen! It will never do. Run, Thompson, to the schoolroom for Miss Flora.'

'Are we really thirteen?' asked Rose. Then she began to count, 'I am one;' then she counted all round the table, and the thirteenth fell on Percival Curgenven.

'No, no,' said he, 'let me count the opposite way. You are one,—two,—three,' the thirteenth then fell to him.

'Well,' said he with a laugh, 'then I won't be the thirteenth, I'll sit at another table. In Cornwall we are as superstitious as you are in Scotland, or are supposed to be.'

'Please, ma'am,' said the servant, returning from the schoolroom, 'Miss Flora has a sick headache, and is gone to bed.'

'There! a fate is in it,' said Sir Archibald; 'one of us must be sacrificed, you see.'

'Let two of us go to a side table,' said Percival, 'Miss Rose and I; then if we quarrel we shall disturb no one.'

Mrs. Boxholder hesitated a moment, and then said 'No, we cannot do that.'

'I am the odd man,' said Mr. West; 'surely I am the one who should perish for the rest. Let me go to the side table.'

'No, Mr. West,' answered the hostess. 'If you do not mind—I am very sorry, but I will give you a partner. I am ashamed to ask it, but it will be the simplest arrangement. Would you object to the governess coming to be fourteenth, and sitting between you and Mr. Curgenven?'

'Delighted, I am sure,' said Mr. West.

'You are most kind to say so,' remarked Mrs. Boxholder, and then to the servant: 'Thompson, go to the schoolroom and tell Mrs. Lambert to come here as she is, not to dress, we can't wait for that. We cannot begin till she comes to be the fourteenth.' Then to Mr. West: 'I am sure you are most self-sacrificing; I am sorry to seem to put upon you, but you see I cannot help myself. You need not talk to her more than you like.'

A moment later Theresa entered, not agitated, quiet in demeanour, apparently indifferent to the fact that she was not in evening dress. Her pale sallow face was handsome, and those who saw that forgot how she was dressed.

Mr. West at once looked with a gratified expression at the hostess that plainly said, 'I am by no means dissatisfied with my lot,' but Mrs. Boxholder did not observe it; with her fan she pointed haughtily to the empty seat, and Theresa, with a slight bow to her, took the place indicated.

At once Percival turned and greeted her with effusion. 'So,' said he, 'I see you at length. Only think of this! As a stop-gap! I am so glad—so glad you are beside me.'

She raised her large speaking eyes and smiled.

There was something that touched Percival's heart in the solitariness of Theresa. He looked round the table at the ladies there, well dressed—with the exception of Lady Duff-Duff—got up to look their best, and then he turned to Theresa, in her sober dark dress without other adornment than a flower fastened in her bosom, her dark hair glossy and smooth, her ivory complexion and lustrous eyes! In beauty—though that was matured and

perhaps tending to decline—she was incomparably superior to those who were in full war-paint at table. And yet she made no assumption to be anything.

‘Theresa,’ said Percival in a low tone, ‘I must have a word with you presently.’

‘I do not know when it can be.’

‘I have come all the way for your answer to my question.’

‘What question?’

‘That I cast through the carriage window.’

She looked into her plate. ‘I cannot give it you now.’

‘No, I do not exact it now. But have it I must.’

Nothing further passed between them; Percival’s attention was drawn away by Miss Boxholder, who wanted to know what Mr. Curgenven could tell her about Aunt Jane and Alice and Mr. Pamphlet, and about various matters connected with Curgenven.

Percival did his best to answer, and Mrs. Boxholder glanced with satisfaction at her daughter and guest, in the conviction that they were getting on famously together.

Presently Percival had another chance of turning to his neighbour on the other side.

‘Theresa! do you know that you have saved my life?’

‘Surely not.’

‘Yes, I was number thirteen, and you came in and made the fourteenth, so I have escaped. I owe you a debt for that.’

‘An imaginary debt is easily repaid. I owe you a real obligation, for you set and healed my arm.’

‘Ah! I forgot about that. So you are well now?’

‘Yes, except for a slight stiffness. Now pray talk to Miss Rose, or her mother will visit your neglect on me.’

‘Where shall you be after dinner?’

‘That depends. If Mrs. Boxholder wishes my presence, in the drawing-room. If not, I suppose I shall go back to the school-room.’

‘Very well. I shall find you somewhere; in the drawing-room or the schoolroom. I have come to Scotland to see you—and you only.’

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE SCHOOLROOM.

WHEN Percival Curgenven entered the drawing-room with the gentlemen after the coffee had been passed round, his eye wandered in quest of Theresa, and he was soon aware that she was not there. Mrs. Boxholder had given her a look accompanied by a slight wave of her hand as she rose from table; this had not escaped Percival, and he understood now its significance.

Theresa had accomplished what had been required of her, to make the fourteenth, and was dismissed back into seclusion, to the nursery or to the schoolroom, and was not to appear in the drawing-room. She was not dressed for the evening, and was consequently unsuited to be with the rest, and only suffered to be among them for so long as was required to avert ill-luck from the party.

Percival's teeth closed, and a little spot of colour rose on his cheek-bones. If Mrs. Boxholder had looked his way she would not have liked the expression of his eye turned towards her.

He hoped against hope that Theresa would return. The party was not lively; it consisted for the most part of elderly persons, and there were elements that damped cheerfulness. Conversation rose, flagged, rose again, again to flag. A young lady sang, and sang out of tune. Mr. West attempted a humorous ditty, but the accompanist had never tried the piece before, did not catch the character, and was unable to accommodate the time to Mr. West's somewhat capricious rendering. Consequently voice and piano were not together, and the comic song proved a dismal failure; no one laughed, and Mr. West, very much ashamed of himself, retired into a corner and looked at an album of photographs.

Miss Rose without much persuasion was induced to play 'Le Carnaval de Venise,' of which everyone knew every note by heart; she played it in a hard, unsympathetic manner. Conversation halted at the first few bars, and then resumed its uneven and straggling course. Mr. Curgenven stood by the piano and turned over the music pages for Rose.

'Now,' said he, 'why do you not give us the "Drumduskie Pibroch" or the "MacNaught Strathspey"?"'

Miss Boxholder looked sharply at him to see whether he were making fun of her, but his muscles did not betray his thoughts. 'Come,' said he, 'we are old acquaintance; a word with you in the conservatory.'

The French windows opened into a glazed gallery that ran the length of the house, and was lighted by pendant lamps of ruby glass. It was furnished with flowers and ferns and plants of variegated foliage.

Mrs. Boxholder's eye followed Mr. Curgenven and her daughter as they entered the conservatory, and she flashed a gleam of triumph across the room at her husband, then hinted to Lady Duff-Duff the secret that filled her maternal heart with satisfaction.

'To propose, is he?' asked Lady Duff-Duff in a loud tone. She was somewhat deaf herself and spoke loudly, as though everyone she addressed were three degrees deafer than herself. Mrs. Boxholder bit her lip. The words had been overheard, and at once a good many pairs of eyes were directed towards the conservatory.

When Percival was out of the room with Rose Boxholder he said: 'I will tell you at once what I want. How is your governess's arm? I attended her after the accident. Indeed, it was Justinian and I who brought it about, and I feel a sort of self-reproach accordingly.'

'I suppose her arm is better.'

'She can use it; I saw that at dinner. Is it quite well?'

'I do not know, I suppose so.'

'I dare say you would be good enough to allow me to see her for a moment, and find out that all is well. Her collar-bone was broken.'

'Oh, certainly. I fancy she is in the schoolroom. We can get to it this way; one window opens into the conservatory.'

'I shall be much obliged. You know I am a surgeon by profession, and this good lady was my patient.'

Rose Boxholder led the way to the end of the conservatory and tapped at a French window over which curtains hung; they were drawn aside, and Theresa appeared and unbolted the door.

Rose stepped in, and as she did so Percival trod on the train of her gown and tore it out of the gathers. She turned on him with an expression of annoyance, and looked at the mischief done.

'You must go to Louisa and ask her to run it up for you,' said

Theresa; 'you cannot return into the drawing-room in this condition.'

Rose, without another word, but with shrugged shoulders and a sulky mouth, swung out of the schoolroom in quest of the lady's-maid; so Percival and Theresa were left together.

The schoolroom was plainly furnished, but comfortable. A pleasant fire was burning in the grate. By this Theresa had been seated in a low chair. There was no other light in the room save that thrown out by the coal fire.

'You were sitting there,' said Percival, pointing to the place from which she had risen to admit him and Rose. 'Go back there again, and let me take a chair by you. I have come nominally to inquire about your collar-bone, but you know very well that I did not come from Cornwall for that alone. You gave me no answer to a question I asked of you as you whirled away from Plymouth. And, by-the-bye, there is some money I borrowed of you——'

'You sent it me.'

'Did I? I had forgotten. That was marvellous; I am usually forgetful.'

Percival Curgenven took a chair on the further side of the fire-place to that occupied by Theresa on her low seat.

'How are you here?' he asked. 'Are they kind to you?'

She had her hands folded on her knee. Her fingers plucked at her dress; she slightly smiled: 'I suppose so—as much as I can expect. I must live, and I must take what I can to live.'

'Now I have come to ask you to leave this situation, and come to Curgenven. My cook borrowed my dogcart and groom and roan—without asking leave——'

'What, you want me to take your situation as cook?' she said, laughing.

'No; do not misunderstand me. All the servants are in revolt. I do not understand how to manage them. I got on well enough in the Pill Box, but in Curgenven I am lost. I must have a wife to manage for me.'

'As a sort of upper servant?'

'No,' said Percival impatiently. 'Of course not. I am bewildered at Curgenven. I want a wife to manage for me. I have not been accustomed to any other than a kick-about life. I have tried ranching and sheep-farming and timber-felling, surgery, journalism, and have failed in all I undertook, but never so dead

as in my present position as squire. I bid fair to upset the whole cart. Come and be my wife, Theresa, and put me and Justinian and the place to rights. There is Justinian. He must be sent to college, or something done with him, and I don't know how to set about it. Then I don't know how to pour out afternoon tea; I gave tea-extract strong as poison to one and water to another; so that you see I positively must have a wife.'

Theresa remained looking musingly into the fire with a half-smile on her face, but with pain in the smile as well as amusement. She did not speak for some minutes, but at last looked up full at Percival and said: 'I should indeed be ungrateful were I to take you at your word without a caution. Do you not see that the wife you want is quite another woman from myself? You require one full of experience of English social life, not one who has been something of a Bohemian in her career as well as by birth. You need one who will supply all that is wanting in yourself. You and I have been hustled about in the world, have lived a hand-to-mouth life, associated not with the best classes, the well-to-do, and well-ballasted. You feel now that you are at a loss how to steer in a shoaly sea, and you ask for a pilot. For that I am unsuited. Take to you one who has grown up in the great social cage, who sees bars on every side and never thinks of beating her wing against these bars, who is content with the groundsel and sugar thrust in betwixt the bars, and has not the wish to cater for herself. That is the mate you require.'

'I know what you mean,' said Percival irritably; 'you advise me to match myself with a Jane Curgenvén, who would drive Justinian into revolt in a week and send me flying from her into space in a fortnight. Do you think it possible I could endure such a woman? One such as Jane cannot think outside the cage-bars. The world without, the glorious sunshine, the free air, the rustling trees, the buttercup meadows are tabooed. The birds of the air that nest in hedge and under ivy are condemned and abhorred. Thank you for your kind advice; it is unpalatable, and I will not take it. Achilles and Siegfried were case-hardened, but each had a vulnerable point, one at the heel, the other between the shoulder-blades, but such a woman as Jane Curgenvén is without a point through which a needle might be driven to prick her conscience. Such women drive me to rebellion. No, Theresa, I must have a wife who has gone through some such experience in life as myself, who can understand my thoughts and troubles and difficulties.'

‘Do you know my story?’

‘I know how badly treated you were.’

‘That is not all. By birth I am almost worse than a nobody. Miss Fenton’s relatives said that I was picked out of a gutter, and harsh though the expression was, it is almost true. My mother was some tramp; she had lost her husband; she was taken ill with fever in a poor canvas tent in a raw wet autumn in a green lane near where Miss Fenton lived in Hampshire. I believe, but for her infinite kindness and gentle pity, I should have died as well as my mother. The parish authorities desired to move my mother; the ground was sodden, the November rains had soaked the canvas of the tent and the gales torn it; but the doctor who was summoned said that she could not be removed to the workhouse, and then dear Miss Fenton intervened and took my mother in. I was saved, but my mother died. Who my father was I do not know, who my mother was I hardly know—gipsies perhaps, tramps certainly, without relatives, without friends, and both died before I knew anything. No kinsfolk have ever sought me out and claimed relationship. I cannot tell, if I became your wife and rich, what they might do, supposing there are any—swarm round and pester me and you for money. Consider that you have been a wanderer, and have formed no ties in your neighbourhood. It would be well now for you to attach to you a woman who is well connected in your neighbourhood, and so through her you would be drawn into the county life of the families about Liskeard, whereas if you take me you will never be other than an alien to it, tolerated by it, not absorbed into it.’

‘I have no particular eagerness to be absorbed into that dull and narrow circle.’

‘You have to live as country squire, associate with men of the same class, and ought to be, in mind and feeling, in touch with it.’

‘That I can never be. I have seen the world, been in all kinds of places and all sorts of society, and cannot cramp my thoughts and interests to the miserable pettinesses that occupy their attention. Come, Theresa, take me. Upon my soul I love and admire you as I do no other woman in the world. I believe with faith unquestioning that I shall be happy with you, and, so help me God, I will do my best to deserve your regard and make you a happy woman.’

He put out his hand towards her. His sincerity was not to be mistaken. His voice trembled as he spoke.

Then the curtains at the window were sharply drawn aside, and Mrs. Boxholder appeared.

‘Oh!’ said that lady. ‘Oh, indeed!’

The injudicious exclamation of Lady Duff-Duff had been heard, and had drawn attention to the fact that Mr. Curgenven and Rose had retired into the conservatory.

‘Who is that strange gentleman?’ asked Sir Archibald of a lady near him.

‘A great Cornish squire, I believe,’ she replied.

‘Bless me, you don’t say so! I thought by his looks he was an American.’

Some parties, who had not heard what was said or gave it no heed, were for sauntering into the lighted conservatory, but were intercepted by Mrs. Boxholder.

‘I think—you will excuse me—I think you had better not. Much vapour rises from the moistened soil at night, and as you seem heated, it might give you a chill, you see, dear Mary Granger. I care for you as a mother. I cannot forget how unwell you have been.’ Then, whilst engaged in conversation with Sir Archibald, she saw her husband make for the conservatory. At once she broke off what she was saying and pursued him.

‘Drumduskie! what are you about?’

‘My dear, there is one of the lamps in the conservatory smoking. I am going to turn it down.’

‘Let it smoke. Don’t you know what is going on there?’

‘No, my dear, only smuts falling.’

‘Smuts! Really you are too bad. Why Rose is receiving an offer.’

‘Well, here she comes,’ said Mr. Boxholder; ‘not much concerned, I take it.’

As he spoke his eldest daughter entered from the hall-door, and her mother at once hastened to her.

‘Well, dear, is all settled?’

‘I had torn my dress out of the gathers,’ answered Rose; ‘that is, Mr. Curgenven did it. So I have been to Louisa to run it up. I have been as quick as I could.’

‘But where is Mr. Percival?’

‘In the schoolroom.’

‘Did you leave him there?’

‘Yes, mamma.’

‘Well, my dear, have you accepted him?’

‘I do not understand, mamma.’

‘Hush! everyone is listening.’

Mrs. Boxholder was puzzled. She saw that eyes were fixed on her and Rose, and that conversation had flagged. Everyone, who knew or suspected that a proposal had been made, was intent to learn how it had been received.

Rose, quite unconscious of this, in the lull in the hum of voices said, so that everyone heard: ‘Mr. Curgenven is in the schoolroom, mamma; he asked me to take him there. He wanted to see and have a talk with the governess.’

Mrs. Boxholder’s colour fell, but, recovering herself, she said hastily: ‘Yes, he has a message for her from Mr. Pamphlet. But really he must not desert us; I’ll fetch him back.’

So the lady, with fluttering heart and rising anger, swept along the conservatory, entered the schoolroom through the half-open window, drew back the curtains, and saw Mr. Percival Curgenven taking the hand of Theresa. He rose at once, so did Theresa.

‘Allow me,’ said Percival, ‘to thank you, Mrs. Boxholder, for your kindness and courtesy shown during the weeks she has been with you to one who will shortly be Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.’

CHAPTER XXVII.

A BROKEN BREAKFAST.

MRS. JANE CURGENVEN was at breakfast with her father and daughter. She had supplied the first wants of both from the coffee-pot, and, before touching the bacon on her plate, she opened her letters.

Mr. Pamphlet, looking up at an exclamation that had escaped his daughter’s lips, was surprised and startled to see her face drawn with an expression unusual, that implied physical or mental pain. Her hands had dropped on the table and the letter had fallen to the ground.

‘Jane, what is it?’

Mrs. Curgenven tried to rise, then sank back in her chair again.

‘Bless me! not a stroke?’ asked Mr. Pamphlet.

Jane Curgenven stooped, picked up the letter and passed it across the table to her father.

Mr. Pamphlet perused it without much emotion. It was from

Mrs. Boxholder. It related how that Mr. Curgenven had called at Drumduskie, how that she, believing in the hint thrown out by her sister, had invited him to dinner, how that, instead of paying attention to Rose and asking for her hand, he had proposed to the governess. It went on to say that she—Mrs. Boxholder—had immediately ordered Mrs. Lambert, as an insolent, designing woman, who had used her house as a trap in which to ensnare and capture a man of means, to quit the house, and how that she believed that this woman was to be married forthwith to Mr. Curgenven. ‘I wish you joy, my dear Jane,’ said Mrs. Boxholder in conclusion; ‘I heartily wish you joy of your new squiress—a crafty, speculating, cunning, deceitful hussy, with no breed, no manners, no morals, no talents.’

The rector, having read the letter, folded it, then pushed his cup towards Mrs. Curgenven, and said in even tones: ‘Half, please, and not quite so sweet as the last.’

His daughter thrust back her chair from the table.

‘Really, papa!’ she exclaimed, then rose and left the room.

‘I’m afraid your mother is somewhat out of sorts,’ said Mr. Pamphlet to Alice, who was alarmed. ‘You need not be uneasy, it will pass. She wishes to be alone.’

‘But she has had no breakfast,’ said the girl.

‘My dear, she has had a good deal more than she can digest,’ answered the rector. ‘Will you half fill my cup, and not too sweet, please?’

When the Rev. Mr. Pamphlet had finished his breakfast he leisurely retired to his study, where he unfolded his newspaper and prepared to read it, when the door was opened and his daughter entered.

‘Really, papa!’ said Mrs. Curgenven, ‘how could you? how could you?’

‘Could what, my dear?’

‘How could you pass your cup for more coffee, and concern yourself about the sugar, after reading such a letter, learning such news?’

‘I am not sure that this is not the best thing that could have happened,’ said the rector, folding his paper so as to be able to get at the telegrams.

‘The best thing that could have happened, papa! Do you know that this abandoned creature will become Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven?’

‘Why not, dear?’

‘Why? For a thousand reasons. She is not a fit person to succeed *me*. She is not a fit person to be at the head of the parish to associate with the gentlefolks round, to bear the name of Curgenven. *She*——’ Jane quivered with indignation and wrath.

‘My dear,’ said the rector with composure, ‘you must consider that she is, and was, Mrs. Curgenven. About that no moral, as well as no legal, doubt can remain.’

‘I dispute it altogether.’

‘But Physic has had properly attested extracts made from the register of the Embassy at Naples.’

‘Registers have been tampered with before now.’

‘We have not the slightest grounds for supposing this to have been done in the case of Lambert and——’

‘That creature! I do not care what the register may say. It was no marriage. I do not believe it was anything but a joke.’

‘It could not be a joke. There are more formalities to be gone through for a marriage at an Embassy than in England.’

‘That vile creature may not have been of age.’

‘Of that we have no proof.’

‘I will not believe it. You, papa, speak of moral and legal proof. Legal proof does not concern me; legality and right are not synonymous terms. How often has the wrong person been accused and sentenced and hanged for a murder!—all in the course of law. Legality does not count with me. And as for moral certainty—that I have most unshaken. Why, papa, have you considered that if the abominable conspiracy between this creature and Physic were based on facts, that *I*—I, your daughter—*I* who have been for so many years Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven—would turn out to have been no better than I should be, not a respectable person, and Alice—Alice, my daughter, no other than a base child? Good gracious me!’ Mrs. Curgenven took the paper impatiently from her father’s hand and began to fan herself with it. ‘A moral impossibility! I am as certain, as positive, that I have been perfectly respectable, and everything that I ought to have been, as that there is a heaven above my head and an earth beneath my feet, and that I am Mrs. Curgenven, the dowager, the widow, the legitimate widow of Captain Lambert.’

‘You beg the question throughout.’

‘I do not admit it to be a question.’

'Now, my dear, do not become hot and extravagant.'

'I am not hot and extravagant, but I cannot understand your pushing up your cup for coffee, and wanting less sugar, when the character of your daughter and the legitimacy of your grandchild were at stake.'

'They were not at stake, Jane; do be reasonable. Whatever that story about Lambert's marriage may have been in reality, the only menace to you was from that person who claimed to have been Lambert's wife.'

'She never was his wife.'

'Never mind that. Now she is about to become Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven, to occupy a position which she says ought to have been hers for the last nineteen years. She gains everything she has desired.'

'It is monstrous that she—such a Thing as she—should get her way.'

'She has got it, and will be content. Every occasion for her to rake up that miserable old story is taken from her.'

'She will do it to spite me.'

'Not unless you drive her to do so by unreasoning impatience and resentment.'

'Resentment indeed!' Mrs. Curgenven tossed her head; 'as if I could feel any such emotion as resentment towards such a despicable, abandoned scum of womanhood as that!'

'My dear, your words are strong.'

'Not a particle too strong.'

'I hope you will not show any ill-feeling towards her. You are not justified in pronouncing on her moral character without knowledge.'

'Oh, I know!'

'What do you know against her?'

'Never mind; I do know.'

'And I insist on being told what it is you have learned that has not reached me.'

'She has been on the stage.'

'Well; she had to earn her livelihood.'

'Everyone knows what the stage means, and in America too!'

'You are judging wickedly and cruelly.'

'I know quite enough. The very fact that she pretends to have been Lambert's wife is in itself condemnation. If that were

not enough, is it not fatal to her moral character that she should pounce down on Percival and devour him?’

‘Really, Jane, this is indeed unreasonable. You yourself wanted to secure Percival for Rose.’

‘Oh, there is no harm in that.’

‘Then where is the harm in this lady taking him?’

‘Lady! Papa, how can you speak of her by such a term? She is no lady, never was, and never can be.’

‘Instead of her pouncing down on Percival, it seems to me that Percival has taken a long flight, hovered over Drumduskie, and swooped down on her.’

‘She summoned him there.’

‘How do you know?’

‘I am morally sure of it. Percival is a fool, and she is clever as the evil one himself.’

‘Anyhow,’ said the rector, ‘give me my paper. The thing is done, or will very soon be done. Percival has made his choice, and this person will very shortly be here, installed in the manor house as Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.’

‘You are not going to be so wicked as to marry them?’

‘I am not asked. I presume they will be married in Edinburgh or in London, and come on here after the wedding or after the honeymoon. You will have to compose yourself to receive them.’

‘I never will receive her. I never will go near the house. I don’t think I will go to church if she dares to show her brazen face within the sacred walls.’

‘My dear Jane, you must not offend Percival or her. Remember there are all the clubs in the parish, there is the National School, there is the Institute, the Parochial Library, there are the Mission woman and the Scripture reader, the Choir, the Band of Hope, Anglo-Israel—all dependent in the main on the subscriptions from Curgenven House. I cannot afford to be on bad terms with Percival, and that without reason. Besides, it always has a bad look if the rector and the squire do not pull together; and, as a matter of course, all the blame is thrown on the former. It stands in the way of preferment, my dear Jane—’

Then in at the door burst Justinian, with flaming cheeks and glittering eyes.

‘Mr. Pamphlet—Aunt Jane’—Mrs. Curgenven was not his

aunt, but the boy had been allowed so to designate her—‘I have had a letter from the gov. Oh, such dreadful things! He’s going to be married. It is a shame; and I always thought he loved my mother so. And it is to her who was thrown out of the gig and broke her collar-bone. I don’t say but she’s not such a bad lot, only now she’ll be sticking herself between us, and the Boss and I will never be so chummy as we have been.’ His voice shook, tears were forming in his eyes.

‘It is infamous! That woman will disgrace your father and the place,’ said Mrs. Curgenven.

‘Be silent, Jane. I will not permit this.’ The rector stood up, he was roused and angry. Jane drew back with a sullen look in her countenance.

‘My boy,’ said Mr. Pamphlet, ‘your father has a perfect right to choose, and has no doubt made the best choice he could—one that will suit him. You must not blame him.’

‘It will spoil my happiness. The governor and I were always together.’

‘It will have this good in it for you, that now you will go to school.’

‘I am too old for that.’

‘Then to a private tutor.’

‘I should not mind. I shall be glad to be away. I cannot bear to think of my father married, and she will very likely turn his heart away from me.’

Mrs. Curgenven was about to speak, but her father raised his hand in caution.

‘My dear Justin, in such a house as Curgenven there must be a mistress. Your father could not get on without a wife to manage for him. Now, as you know, everything is in confusion, the servants leaving, and pillaging right and left.’

‘Let him pay a woman to be his housekeeper. But to give me another mother is too bad.’

‘No woman would look after his and your interests like one who is his wife. Your father cannot in his present position consult your fancies only, but what is best for the place, for himself, and for you. Now, Justin, I am quite sure that were he alone here, unassisted, he would become desperate.’

‘I don’t know about that. She shall never be a mother to me.’

‘You will show respect to her as your father’s wife.’

Justin shrugged his shoulders.

Then arrived Mr. Physic.

'So, sir,' said the agent, 'you have heard the news? Wonderful, is it not? Never expected that. I have had a letter from Mr. Curgenven, and he desires that the bells should be rung, of course with your permission, to welcome him and his bride when they arrive.'

'When will that be?'

'In a week.'

'Papa,' said Mrs. Curgenven, 'you never will allow that!' Her colour rose. 'It will be a desecration of the bells.'

'I am the best judge of that, Jane,' said her father gravely. 'Indeed I shall. It would be remarked were the bells not to be rung. When Percival came into residence, with good feeling and kindly thought for us, either the ringers did not attempt to give him a peal or he forbade it. Now that he returns with a wife, with Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven, of course I shall allow the bells to be rung. You may write and say so, Physic. It would be a gross and unpardonable offence against good manners and against policy to refuse them on such an occasion.'

'Quite so. Hear, hear!' said Physic. 'Clever, too, weren't she, to catch the great prize, before any other anglers had their rods out.'

'You will be pleased to remember his son is present,' said the rector haughtily.

'Bless me, so he is. How are you, young squire?' Justinian did not like the agent, and he responded with curtness that was short courtesy.

'Mr. Physic,' said Mrs. Curgenven, 'will you permit me a word in the garden with you?'

'Certainly, madam,' and with a bow he held the door as she swept out of the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SECOND DISAPPOINTMENT.

'If I may trouble you,' said Mrs. Curgenven with a stiff bend and an imperious wave of her hand in the direction of the garden—that is to say, the walled rose garden. A country parsonage is not infrequently made sweet and lovely by its old-fashioned garden. The parson has not at his command sufficient glass and

a sufficiently skilled gardener to inflict on him the fashionable bedded-out uniformity. He has to content himself with the old favourite flowers that were the delight of his predecessors, growing without more attention than occasional weeding and thinning out; flowers that have made the garden their own, consider the beds as their own, and will not be displaced for newer and more brilliant introductions; flowers robust in growth and hardy in constitution, exhaling odour as of the Spice Isles, not leaving the soil bare and barren for nine months and covering it for three, but coming and going in wondrous order, a great variety, changing kaleidoscopically every week, in winter represented by Christmas roses and aralias, and a timid cheiranthus and anemone. And the garden wall is covered with the old monthly rose, over which the laundry-maid empties the soapsuds every week, and which, in return, flowers abundantly till the midst of January.

Into such a garden as this Mrs. Curgenven introduced Mr. Physic. It possessed one long walk under a wall that faced south, against which grew fig-trees, yellow jessamine, and traveller's joy. Under the wall was a narrow bed in which at this time were beautiful pink Guernsey lilies and a border of autumn colchicum.

'Now, then,' said Mrs. Curgenven, 'what do you think of this affair? Is there no way of stopping it? Can you not find that this wretched woman has a husband alive?'

'I cannot do that, madam. I am sorry, but what can I do?'

'It is not my place to say what you are to do. You are a lawyer, and I suppose there are some means of preventing Mr. Curgenven from making a fool of himself and covering the family with discredit.'

'Indeed, I know of no way.'

'But it is such a terrible thing; that person is no more fit to be in Curgenven than is Esther Morideg. No neighbours will call. She will not be received into any decent house. It will be intolerable—living so near, having her occupying my rooms, sitting in my chair, having the key to my store-room. It is contamination to think of it.' Then sharply turning on Physic she asked: 'About her past history, what have you learned?'

'Very little. I never dreamed of her becoming the wife of Mr. Percival. All I know about her concerns the marriage. That I did investigate. I made the requisite inquiries at Naples, and ascertained that she really had married Mr. Lambert Curgenven

when he was a young lieutenant. There can be no doubt about the case. There is a family resident at Salerno, I understand, that was at Naples at the time and they remember the circumstances. I believe the chaplain who married them is now incumbent of a parish in the East of England. I am sorry to have to assure you that all doubts as to the fact of the marriage are at an end. That is all I know.'

'Yes, you fancy you have established it. But have you communicated with this incumbent in the East of England, and this family at Salerno?'

'I have not written to the latter, but to the former I have.'

'I do not believe in this creature being the same person. She has not been confronted with any of those who were at the pretended marriage. How can you say she is not an impostor, who, having heard of the affair, takes on herself the rôle of being the neglected, ill-used wife?'

'That view is possible, but it is easily dispelled. If need arise for establishing the identity it can, no doubt, be done, and what is questioned made quite certain.'

"No doubt!" "quite certain!" You are all in league against me. I *do* doubt. I am *not* certain, and till all is so clear that every line of it can be read I will not believe, in the first place, in the marriage; and then, even suppose there were this marriage, that the woman who has been here and has now entangled Mr. Percival in her net is the same person who secured Lambert—I mean my husband. If that woman comes here I do not care where I go, what I do; I will not remain in the same place with her.'

'So confess defeat,' said Physic with a smile.

'What do you say? Confess defeat? You think it will be so? Rather than that I will stay and confront her. Oh, would to Heaven!—but no, I must not say that. By the way, there was a scandal—I heard you say something about it—as to the reason why Lambert, supposing there were truth in the story of the marriage, deserted her.'

'Nothing could be proved.'

'But a great deal may be proved. There is no smoke without fire.'

They had reached the end of the long walk. Then both turned.

Physic, speaking slowly, asked: 'But if it be so unpleasant to you, madam, to have the lady in this place, would you not do your utmost to force her to quit it?'

‘Of course I would. But what can I do?’

‘You must understand that I throw out a suggestion only. There was—there may be still—a will in existence executed by the late Captain Curgenven, that left everything to you in trust for Miss Alice.’

‘There is! Where is it?’

‘That is more than I can say. Some parties interested in the matter have it. I do not say I have seen it. If that will were produced, then Mr. Percival and his new missus would be bundled neck and crop out of Curgenven, and you would be reinstated as mistress of the house.’

Mrs. Curgenven drew a long breath and walked more uprightly than before. ‘There is such a will! It must be produced. I knew that Lambert had provided for us.’

‘If this will could be found it would crush Mrs. Percival, who has married the new squire for his wealth and position, and has rejected others, I dare say, for him.’

‘Where is this will?’

‘You do not suppose that I have it?’

‘Of course not, or you would have proved it for us.’

‘I have been sounded relative to it by interested persons who have the will. I believe that there is no likelihood of their surrendering it unless well paid for so doing.’

‘Oh, they shall be paid.’

‘They will not be content with a small sum. What do you now get out of the estate? Nothing.’

‘Nothing by law, I suppose; but Percival has assured me that I shall be treated liberally.’

‘Yes, he will give you alms. But what if you could establish your right and that of your child to Curgenven? What if, when the bride arrives and expects to be received with bells ringing, and triumphal arches, and cheers of “Welcome!” from the tenantry, and the path flower-strewn by the school children—the children of your class, madam—she finds, instead, that she has not any right to descend at the steps, and that you can slam the door in her face?’

‘I would give a great deal to be able to do this,’ said Mrs. Curgenven with heightened colour.

‘The difference to you, ma’am, would be that of four thousand a year and nothing. Of course the parties who pretend to have the will in their hands are well aware of that, and therefore will

not be content with less than a thousand pounds for the testament.'

'A thousand pounds! Surely I can obtain a warrant or something of the sort to force them to give up the will?'

'If you knew who they were.'

'But you know.'

'No. I am approached through a third party. They are cunning dogs, very cunning, and are aware of the danger. It will require negotiation in a very circuitous manner to obtain the document, so that no one may be compromised. But I think it can be done for the sum I named.'

'It is an impossible sum.'

'It might, perhaps, be arranged to be paid in two instalments. I am not sure, I merely suggest this as possible.'

'I don't believe it could be enforced. Such an agreement must be illegal. It is blackmail.'

'No doubt it is, but it is the only way by which this will can be got back into our hands. There are great rascals in the world, and one must at times submit to their rascality to get at one's rights.'

Mrs. Curgenven considered.

It would be a satisfaction to be back in the manor-house. She had felt cramped and oppressed within the narrow walls and under the low ceilings of the Parsonage. She had missed her conservatories, her flowers and fruit, but, above all, the deference that had been paid her as squires and queen of Curgenven. A parlour-maid, a housemaid and a cook formed the establishment at the Rectory, and she liked to be waited on by liveried servant-men and a butler. She could not now call out her carriage and pair, but must drive in a little buggy with her father, and the clerical cob was a slow trotter that walked up all the hills and down as well. But comforts, luxuries, deferences weighed light with her against the overwhelming desire to exclude that woman, Theresa, from the great house, from occupying that position which had once been hers. She could not reconcile her mind to remaining in the place and seeing this woman in the great house, reigning in her stead, occupying the manorial pew in the church, taking precedence of her in social life, receiving letters addressed 'Mrs. Curgenven,' whereas she must sink to be Mrs. L. Curgenven.

It really would be worth a thousand pounds to escape such a miserable condition of affairs, such daily annoyance, such bitter humiliation to her pride. Her father, she knew, would stoop to

be friendly to this person because of the subscriptions to the parochial organisation which he could not do without.

‘I suppose this will of which you speak,’ said Jane, throwing up her head, ‘acknowledges my right to be Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven?’

‘Well, no,’ answered the agent with some hesitation; ‘you see that would spoil everything. The will, I am told, mentions you as Jane Pamphlet, commonly known as Jane Curgenven.’

‘What! proclaim me a—something I will not even name!’

‘It need never be known.’

‘But if the will be proved it will be known.’

‘It will not be talked of, you may be sure, by the officials at Somerset House; they have other things to think of.’

‘But anyone may pay a shilling and read it—read in it that I—I, Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven, have been but the mistress of Captain Curgenven, living in adultery, and my child his bastard. Heaven forbid! There is no such will. Such a will never could have been drawn up by my husband. He dared not have done it. It is an impudent forgery; it is a forgery by designing, unprincipled persons who seek to make capital out of my difficulties. No, in Heaven’s name, not one penny will I give for such a will. It is no genuine will! What a world of fraud and wickedness we inhabit! Why, such a document was designed to make out my husband to be one of the greatest scoundrels that ever lived. He was thoughtless and had his weaknesses, but he was a man of honour and a gentleman. No, emphatically No. I will none of it.’

Mr. Physic drove back to the market town that day with his mind not on his cob.

He had met with two rebuffs, first from Mr. Percival Curgenven and then, that day, from Mrs. Jane. Neither would pay for what he had in his possession. Percival was ready to accept the consequences should the will be produced. Jane was unwilling to have it produced, even though it should secure her a future of comfort and a position of dignity. Physic had reckoned on Percival falling at once under the inducement he held out to him of having the document destroyed that would expel him from Curgenven. Physic had thought it well to let the globe-trotter taste the pleasures of rank and wealth before he warned him of the precariousness of his position. But Percival, rolling stone though he had been, improvident, without tenacity of purpose, without

persistence in any course, had his own ideas of what was right and honourable, and there was that in the manner in which he had cast from him the solicitations of the agent which convinced the latter that the squire was sincere in his resolve to do nothing which was not aboveboard.

'He's a fool,' muttered Physic; 'he don't know which side his bread is buttered; or, I shouldn't wonder if he don't care particular for butter at all, he's gone on so long on dry bread.'

As for Mrs. Jane Curgenven's objection, he could understand that better than he could the refusal of Percival.

'She's 'tarnation proud, that she is. She'd rather be Mrs. Curgenven on twopence ha'penny than take thousands and have it known she was no missus at all.'

He drove on with his chin on his breast and his brows knit.

'There's naught for it,' said he. 'I must try it on with the new missus.'

Then he laughed.

'Well, now,' said he, 'it was just hereabouts that she caught me across the back of my hand with the reins. I'll make her smart for the smart she then gave me. What's she, to become Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven? She's no better than an adventuress. She'll have no scruples. She'll know the vally of butter. She'll do everything she can not to have it scraped off with a rusty knife.'

He shook his head. 'She's a deep 'un,' said he, 'to go and refuse me, as she did, with such airs too—she who hadn't a farthing to bless herself with! But she had her eye on Percival, and he has caught hers. A clever rogue! But she shall find me cleverer than she is. She thinks, does she, that she's netted Curgenven, with its park and its mansion, and the family plate and jewels, and the presentation of the Rectory, and four thousand a year, and moorland where there be mines that, if properly managed, would double the income? She thinks she has got all that by making eyes and saying "Yes," does she? Then, by Ginger, she's mistaken! I have to be reckoned with. If she will eat butter, she must pay for it—and pay me.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

A RUINED HOME.

JUSTINIAN walked with flushed cheek to the Rectory. His lips were dry, and he felt feverish and restless. He had not slept much the previous night—according to his own account not at all, but that was an exaggeration into which others liable to wakefulness fall. His father was to return that day, bringing with him the new wife and mistress of Curgenvén. That she should be mistress of Curgenvén concerned Justinian little, but that his father should have taken to him a companion who would thenceforth be nearer and dearer to him than he, his son, was; that concerned the boy greatly, and made him very unhappy. He had been with his father in all occupations and amusements, had had hardly a companion of his own age—certainly none whom he loved to be with so much as his father, who had the carelessness and caprice of a child in him in his mature years, who entered with zest into all sports, and had as great an aversion as had the boy to all serious work.

Justinian felt himself cast aside, and he was bitter at heart against the woman who had supplanted him. If the truth must be told, the lad had cried during the night, but he hardly admitted to himself that he had been guilty of such weakness.

He could not amuse himself in the house or in the grounds. On all sides were tokens of preparation for the reception of the new Mrs. Curgenvén—servants dusting and polishing, gardeners examining borders and weeding drives. So he went to the Rectory to divert his thoughts.

But Alice was engaged at her music with a master, and must not be disturbed. Mrs. Jane Curgenvén could not trust herself to speak more than a few words with the lonely boy; she felt with him and for him, but had sufficient discretion and good feeling not to give vent before him to what she thought. The Reverend the Rector was due at the school to teach the children nothing that could do them any good in this world or the next in the most sounding words. Mr. Pamphlet flattered himself and informed all the world that no Dissenter ever withdrew a child from the class for religious teaching in the Curgenvén school. This was not, however, altogether wonderful, as the teaching of

the rector was so absolutely colourless that not a prism could polarise it and resolve it to definite tints.

Justinian, finding that he was not wanted or welcome at the Rectory, left it and wandered in the direction of the moors. He would go there—away from every living man, lie in the sun and fret over his trouble alone.

But hardly had he entered the lane that led out on the moors than he encountered a party of men armed with picks and crow-bars, headed by Mr. Physic, all, save their leader, smoking and laughing and talking.

Physic addressed some passing observation to Justinian, which he acknowledged with a nod, and then pushed on. He disliked the agent, and the observation made was not one to please him; it referred to his 'new mamma.'

No sooner was the young fellow on the moor than his arm was caught by Esther; she was in great agitation, and her eyes were full of tears.

'They've a-done it,' she said. 'Oh, Master Justinian! Do'y come now and see.'

'What is it, Esther?'

'They've a-been a-muzzling' (knocking down) 'the house. There was a core o' men here—a footy' (daring) 'lot they was. And vayther, he be like as one maaazed.'

'Your father back!'

'Yes, I reckon, a' far as his body can be, but not his mind. He ain't the same man. Come along, soas!'

Justinian found it hard to keep up with the girl, who ran before him, and turned occasionally to see that he was following, and to hurry him forward.

On reaching Tolmenna Justinian found that it was completely wrecked. The wretched furniture had been taken out of the cottage and cast in a heap on the turf or piled up, and then roof and walls had been destroyed by the workmen engaged by Mr. Physic. The chimney stood, and some fragments of wall; but what had at one time been the room in which the family had lived was reduced to an accumulation of turf, rafter, and stone, thrown together. To restore the cottage so as to be habitable was not possible.

Amidst his furniture sat, in a stupefied and listless mood, the owner of the ruined cottage, the man who had once knocked down Physic—himself a greater wreck than his house.

The old moorman, accustomed to spend his days abroad in

the open air, traversing the hillsides, unrestrained by hedge where there was not a road, not even a path, asking no man's leave to go where he had a mind, consulting no will save his own as to what he should do, at an advanced period of life had been suddenly translated to a prison, and every condition of existence had been reversed. Unable to endure the change, his mind had given way. He had been released, and had returned home with his brain benumbed, and if aught further had been needed to complete his stultification, it was to have his house gutted and then destroyed before his eyes. He made no resistance. He looked on with dazed eyes, and where he had sunk down when driven forth there he remained.

Meanwhile the old woman had gone off in search of some place of refuge. Warning enough had been given by Physic that he intended to dislodge his tenants, but the threat had been disregarded, and no provision made by them against the day when they would be homeless.

With his wonted impetuosity, and his generous feelings roused, Justinian went up to the old man, saying: 'It is a shame! I'll see my father about it.'

'This b'ain't his land,' answered the moorman.

'No; but he has plenty of houses. I will see that you have one.'

Old Morideg shook his grey head.

'I were born and bred on the moor,' said he. 'Your father ha'n't got any houses there, and I can't live where I'm not free. No, young squire.' Again he shook his head. 'It be my fault, it be. To every man comes once his chance, and if he put it from him or take hold wi' half a heart, then he never gets his chance again.'

'But what chance came to you?'

'See,' said Morideg, extending his open hand to the ruins of his house. 'Thickey house 'ud been standing as good as iver if I'd a took my chance when the Lord gave him to me.' After a pause and a blow against his grey head: 'Us be a pass'l o' ungrateful creeturs, as is blind to what us ought to do till it be too late. Thickey house—the Lord put the chance bevoor me, and I didn't lay hold wi' both hands.'

'But what chance did Heaven give you?'

'To knock'n on the head, stone dead, man,' answered Morideg.

'To knock whom?'

'Why, Lawyer Physic, for sure. Who else could I mean? I just gave'n a fiffery sort o' a clout, but I shu'd a given he a good blow as 'ud a skat his neddick' (broken his neck), 'and then thickey house 'ud a been standing still.'

'But,' said Justinian, startled at the self-reproach of the old man, 'if you had killed Mr. Physic you'd have swung for it.'

'I? Who'd ha' swung me?'

'You'd have been caught and sent to prison, tried, and hanged.'

'No, they'd ne'er a-caught me on these moors.'

'Well, anyhow, you could not have come back to the house.'

'Maybe. I don't deny that. But, then, some day or other I mun leave 'n for good and all. It ain't I as matters, it's the house. There's no house now for my old woman nor for Esther. If I'd a done for Physic he'd not ha' been able to a-muzzled it all down from the strick to the plancheon' (from the thatching to the floor), 'as he hev a-done. And then there'd be a home for Esther. But I never proper laid ho'd o' the chance the Lord gev me. There's the unfort'nate thing, and now I mun suffer for it.' He rubbed his head. 'Does Physic think to find ball' (open a mine) 'here where the old men never made costeening' (exploring) 'pits? Everyone who ain't a fool knows that there be no tin where no costeening and no streaming hev been tried. The old men warent' fools. He who goes after tin elsewhere, he's sure to go wrong.'

The wife came up. She had been to a farm under Trewortha Tor, and had obtained permission for her to move with Roger and her granddaughter for a while into an old building on the further side of the stream—a building long used as a cowhouse or stable, which had a roof to keep the interior dry, but was without window or chimney. Mrs. Morideg knew very well that if she asked for anything it would not be denied her, so great was the fear in which she was held; at the same time she was aware that she and her family would be unwelcome tenants, and she had therefore asked for the use of the shed only till such time as a fresh cottage could be erected to accommodate her party and contain her few sticks of furniture.

Justinian again offered one of his father's cottages, but the Moridegs refused it again. They could not breathe, they could not be happy, in the midst of hedges, among trees, on cultivated land. Then he cheerfully and good-humouredly assisted them in the transport of their goods. The farmer of Trewortha

had sent some of his men and a rude cart, but no crockery could be placed on wheels where there was not a road, only a track over the moor, and where the cart bounced and lurched at every moment in such a manner that it was wondrous that it did not itself go to pieces.

The place fixed on by Mrs. Morideg for a temporary dwelling was further removed from civilisation, deeper in the depths of the wilderness than where the old hut had stood. There is a little stream called the Withy Brook that rises in a broad basin under the Cheesewring and Boarrah Tors, wild, but devoid of remarkable beauty. But a ridge of granite runs out from the east and contracts the valley, and on passing this a scene of singular desolation and beauty is disclosed. Kilmar, a granite mountain of noble proportions, towers up in queenly majesty above a wide marsh into which the Withy Brook and several other streams from converging glens plunge and disappear. The grey level surface of the marsh forms a triangle and covers what was once a lake, and is now impassable by the foot of man. Finally, the united streams break their way over a step of granite, and fall in cascade into the River Lynher. Tradition says that a city (Tresillan) stood at the margin of the engulfed lake, that was a market town before Launceston and Liskeard were other than breezy downs; and, strange to say, the banks and slopes from the hills are strewn with ruins of ancient dwellings and enclosures of unknown age, the remains of an unknown people whose flint weapons are turned up by the spade and share wherever a farmer extends the area of cultivated land.

‘Do you see?’ said Esther, pointing to the wild expanse; ‘now you can understand what vayther and I said, as how none could ever catch him or me if us chose to go on the moors, and the police were after us. Why, I reckon there’s none but I as know how to cross Trewortha and Tresillan Marshes. There’s but one way, and there’s not another could do it. If he tried he’d go in and never rise again. But none would be that venturesome to try it.’

The wind was blowing from the south-east. The two young people stood on high ground, looking down on the desolate surface of the marsh.

‘Hark!’ said Esther. ‘I reckon I hear bells. For sure it be the Curgenven bells.’

Justinian’s heart contracted.

‘My father has come home,’ he said, ‘bringing with him a new

mother for me, and I feel like one banished from home—much as do you, Esther.’

The tears rose in Justinian’s eyes, and gall embittered his heart. He bit his fingers to conceal the tremor of his lips, and then waving one hand bade Esther begone, with the promise that he would follow in a few minutes.

She accepted the dismissal and ran down the hill. She was wanted in her new home.

If it had not been that his father was bringing a new wife with him to Curgenven, Justinian would have been there to welcome him—nay, he would have run along the road to forestall his arrival. But now, as the boy said to himself, he would not be required. His father would not miss him. He would be so full of care and love for this woman that he would have no thought to spare for his son. He would show her the house, the gallery with the paintings and cabinets and tapestry, the family portraits, the conservatory, the garden. No, Justinian believed he would not be missed; if his father gave him a thought it would be mixed with self-congratulations that the lad was not about the place when he brought home his bride.

‘I hate that woman,’ muttered he, ‘and so does Aunt Jane. I shan’t go home till nightfall, and then I’ll just creep up to my room and be seen of none. I don’t want to meet her. And—I’ll go to school or college, or to sea—anywhere to be away from what is no longer a home to me.’

(To be continued.)

UP A CREEK IN DEMERARA.

It is ten o'clock in the morning, and for two hours past the open river has been like a furnace. The glare is almost blinding as the sun pours down on the mirror-like surface of the water. Our negro boatmen have been paddling since daybreak, and now begin to nod; even the steersman, who should be wide awake, lets the head of the *bateau* fall off every few minutes as his head droops. The sides of our craft are almost burning to the touch, and the black skins of the paddlers glisten in the intense light, while we white men are almost stifled under our umbrellas. One of the negroes begins whistling for a wind, and causes a laugh at the absurdity of expecting anything so grateful. Earlier in the morning there was a breeze, and the fringe of vegetation along the bank of the river threw a little shade, under which we paddled comfortably; but now the breeze has gone, and the shadow of the trees become too narrow to be available. Everyone is looking for the mouth of the creek, and urging the paddlers to go a little faster so that we may get a shelter.

With the promise of a schnap the negroes bend forward with a will, singing and keeping time with their paddles, until the *bateau* skims along and produces a slight movement in the air, which is very grateful in comparison with the utter stagnancy of a minute or two before. Presently we are steered into a little bay from which flows a stream of coffee-coloured water, and are informed that this is the mouth of the creek. Immediately in front and on either side towering masses of foliage shut out the view, and at first it looks as if there is no opening. Bushes come down to the water and hanging creepers festoon these with rosy bignonias, yellow allamandas, dipladenias, and the thousand handsome flowers which decorate the edge of the forest.

Proceeding onward we find the apparent bay opening into the first bend of the creek, and in a few minutes we are under the trees. At once there is a most agreeable difference in the temperature. It is still hot and steamy, but our eyes are no longer dazzled by the glare. Above, the canopy of foliage meets, branches from either side uniting to form an arcade, through which only diffused light can penetrate. On one side is a large hog-plum

tree loaded with fruit, some of which is floating down the stream and affords refreshment to the party.

Past the first bend we come to another, where a gap in the forest wall allows the sunlight to penetrate. Here in the water is a large clump of crinums—the lilies of Guiana—their dark-green foliage and white flowers contrasting with the almost black waters of the creek. Near these is a bed of giant arums, their tapering stems twenty feet high, while palms and marantas fill up the background. Hardly can we appreciate one vista before we come upon another. Now the creek turns to the right and anon to the left, making long loops here and short ones there, the stream coming down so swiftly that in some places we can hardly get round the curves. Every turning brings us into another fairyland. Here is a giant mora, on the branches of which a flock of parrots are screaming, their green and crimson plumage flashing now and again as a ray of light penetrates the forest canopy. Below this, clumps of the graceful manicole, an eta, or a troolie palm, with bamboos, heliconias and ravenalias, help to make a picture transcendent in beauty. Every group differs from the others, and there are so many species that the variety is most pleasing. In one place the banks are lined with tree-ferns, then comes a bed of dahalibana palms; here the vegetation is crowded, and a little farther we catch a glimpse into the dim recesses of the forest. Now we come upon a trailing mass of creepers like curtains half closing the scene, and a little farther pass under an arabesque gateway of bush ropes.

Everywhere the trees shade us overhead and the creek water is deliciously cool. The vast trunks rise up on either side and unite above, so that our craft winds through an immense arcade. Beyond the banks of the wide river, where the vegetation slopes up from the water, the trees are almost on the same level. In the forest itself they vary in size from the great giant six feet through, to the slender stick of as many inches, but all are united in apparent confusion above our heads. Sometimes a palm may be seen from the river to rise above its surroundings, and before coming into the creek an immense silk-cotton tree was conspicuous above all others. Wishing to get near to this we told one of our men who knew the locality to let us land as near as we could. After taking a score of turnings he informed us we could reach it from here with a great deal of trouble. Taking our cutlasses therefore we went ashore, walking in an oozy rich soil of

clay and rotting leaves, only prevented from sinking at every step by the interlacing roots. Near the bank of the creek prickly palms, creepers, and a thousand tall marantas obstruct our way, but after chopping a lane through these the forest becomes clear of all save a few bush ropes. Winding in and out among the buttresses we arrive at last under the veritable king of the forest. Towering above us to a height of a hundred feet is a trunk at least twenty feet through, with buttresses sloping down in every direction and forming angular chambers. Our whole party of a dozen stand in one of these and are unable to look over into the next division. Above our heads the dome of branches and foliage covers an area of over three hundred feet in diameter, each great limb larger than the finest timber trees in Europe. This magnificent tree is a little world in itself. From the ground rise hundreds of bush ropes like the rigging of a ship, and far above we see their scrambling branches among the more stiff limbs of their host. Among these, seated securely on every branch, are a hundred species of epiphytes, including wild pines, orchids, ferns, peperomias, and arums. Some are upright and stiff, others hanging downwards, and a few creeping round and round the branch. The leaves and flowers of both tree and bush rope are indistinguishable from below, and even the army of epiphytes can only be identified by aid of a glass.

Returning to our *bateau* we proceed onwards, scene after scene exhibiting something more wonderful and interesting. Here is a tree leaning across and loaded with interesting plants. A gongora with its pendulous spike of crimson locust-like flowers, yellow brassias, delicate waxy stanhopeas, and a score of other orchids, embellish its trunk amid delicate creeping ferns and mosses. Bird's-nest-like arums with great leaves are very conspicuous, while that curious cactus, *Rhypsalis Cassytha*, hangs down like clusters of mistletoe. Now we come to a number of long cords dangling from above, and looking far upwards see that they are the aerial roots of a gigantic arum perched eighty feet above us. As they touch the water they branch into masses of fibrous roots which convey water to that magnificent rosette of leaves so far overhead. The ivy-like *marcgravia* is conspicuous on some of the trunks, its branches bearing the ring of curious pitchers which make it so interesting to a botanist. Its cousin, the *norantea*, has scrambled to the top of a great tree, and makes a grand show with its long spike of orange-scarlet pitchers. Here are the large

flowers of the cowhage vine hanging from threads, and near them some of the pods with their curious ribs and bristles, containing those round seeds commonly called horse-eyes. Then comes a wallaba with pods also depending from long cord-like stems, resembling miniature swords strung up to the trees. A flash of yellow through the tree-tops shows where the etabally is flowering, and here close at hand is a tree with every branch and twig decorated with rosy stamens standing out like bristles.

In this wonderful fairyland the eye never tires. We can hardly speak to each other for fear of losing something of the feeling of awe which steals over us. Presently the negroes commence one of their boat songs, which seems to harmonise with the surroundings. We are alone with nature and even rude music is not discordant. All is silent in the forest, save at long intervals when a howling monkey utters its weird series of notes. It is now mid-day, when almost every bird and beast is sleeping. A dreamy feeling comes over us, and we should like to lie down in hammocks between the trees and give way to it. Hardly a living creature is seen, only a splendid blue morpho butterfly now and again dancing across. As its wings catch a ray of light they shine with a brilliancy which can only be appreciated under such circumstances.

We are awakened from our reverie by an obstruction. Here is a confused mass of branches and foliage stretching from one bank to another immediately in front. A tree has lately fallen bringing with it everything that stood in the way, and now proves a formidable obstacle to further progress. We decide to get through some way or other, and after consulting the boatmen commence to attack the wreckage in front. The trunk is too large to cut through, but as it stands a foot above the water we expect to push our *bateau* under. One branch after another goes floating down the stream and the bow is soon up to the trunk. One of the party after another then scrambles over, the *bateau* slips through, and we all embark on the other side.

On again through ever-changing scenes of beauty, grandeur, and magnificence. Now the creek turns one way and then another, the windings more than doubling our journey. Some times we have to crouch down in passing under a fallen tree, and are continually bending this way and that to avoid hook-leaved palms, aerial roots, and hanging creepers. Here is the pretty white-felt-like nest of a humming-bird, and further on more nests of

other birds made of twigs and dried grass. The pendulous homes of marabuntas (species of wasps) are also common, and occasionally we see the large webs of sociable caterpillars. Where the climbing plants hang in great festoons, myriads of bats hang themselves up for the day and flutter out as we pass.

Suddenly we enter a tunnel of foliage where the light is so obstructed that it appears to be almost nightfall. Not a leaf can be seen here, but only a confused mass of branches and twigs. On a branch just above our heads coils a large snake, and at first the boatmen hesitate to paddle under, but as it seems sluggish we decide not to interfere and go on. A light now appears at the end of our tunnel, and in a few minutes we are in a blaze of sunlight with not a tree on either side. Here the creek broadens to a lagoon, and is almost covered with water lilies and cabombas, with here and there a tangled mass of utricularias throwing up spikes of yellow or violet flowers. Looking round we find that the creek is meandering through a natural amphitheatre, bordered by a bank of forest and fringed by an advanced guard of eta palms. The plain within these surroundings is level and covered with green herbage, appearing like a meadow in the distance. Unlike a meadow, however, it is nothing more than a swamp, covered with razor-grass (*Scleria*), six or eight feet high and without a break. If it were possible to step ashore we should find the ground oozy and covered with water, but no one cares to attempt a landing. We are quite satisfied with drawing a specimen of the leaves through the fingers, and will not risk stumbling among them to cut our hands and faces.

Past the savannah, through another tunnel, and we are again in the forest. Here the ground is low and almost always flooded, pools of dark-brown water lying everywhere between the moras and wallabas. Only on the huge buttresses of these trees can a footing be obtained in the wallaba swamp. Rarely does even a water plant succeed in establishing itself in these dark recesses, but everywhere the pools are clear and the roots and buttresses free from climbers of all kinds. Even along the creek nothing but masses of fibrous roots line the banks, broken here and there by channels which branch off and lose themselves in a network of little creeks and pools.

The trees are getting thinner and the gloom less until we again come into a savannah. Here a bank of foliage comes down on one side, while the other is an open grassy swamp stretching

far away towards the coast. The line of bushes and forest trees to our left is a perfect wall, without a break, rising immediately from the water and decorated with a thousand flowers. The savannah is not so impenetrable as the one passed before, but is choked with light grasses, a shrub or two and a few flowering plants, while here and there a stately *eta* palm stands alone. Now the line of bushes gets broken and the creek opens out into a lake ; then a few isolated trees mark off the course of the stream, which here has little current and is almost choked with vegetation. It is sometimes difficult to find the channel, and the *bateau* may be paddled far out of its course before grounding. At night it is almost impossible to find the way, cases being known of parties lost for hours, paddling this side and that, and only regaining the creek after sunrise. The trees here have a starved appearance quite different from the luxuriance of the forest. They manage to live, but do not thrive. Low, and with gnarled trunk and limbs, the tree of the swamp is obviously in the midst of uncongenial surroundings. Instead of developing a canopy of umbrageous foliage, its leaves are few and apparently intended to let the sun through and prevent moisture stagnating under them. Many of the trunks are almost covered with orchids, these being the only epiphytes able to endure the excessive moisture of such places.

After paddling for an hour in the burning sun we again enter between two lines of bushes and trees. Here a sand-reef crosses the creek, and a striking difference in the vegetation is perceptible. The ridge is covered with trees, but they are tall and thin, and the forest is easily penetrable. Beyond this, on one side of the creek, is a fringe of trees, growing evenly as if planted by man. From the creek it is open, and landing, we aim to get through to the savannah behind. On the inner side, however, a jungle of small shrubs, grasses, and lycopodiums stop the way, which at first appears almost insurmountable. However, the burliest of the party turns his back to the wall of vegetation, pushing through with only a few scratches, and the others soon follow in his track.

Here is one of the prettiest scenes in Demerara—an English park in the tropics. Before us is an expanse of meadow, decorated with flowers and bordered by a wavy line of forest. The soil is almost pure pipeclay, and consequently nothing but the smallest sedges and more delicate flowering plants can find subsistence. The

sturdy razor-grass and coarse grasses and sedges are wanting, so the more delicate plants find their opportunity. Unfortunately, as on all the savannahs, the ground is not level, but made up, as it were, of clods, isolated from each other, with narrow channels between. In the rainy season every little hummock is surrounded by water, making the savannah very slippery and difficult walking. To the eye, however, the expanse seems perfectly level, and the winding banks of vegetation, the line of trees alongside the creek, and the beautiful flowers all round us, remind us of Raleigh's description of a similar place on the Orinoco:

'On both sides of this river we passed the most beautiful countrie that ever mine eies beheld; and whereas all that we had seen before was nothing but woods, prickles, bushes, and thornes, heere we beheld plaines of twenty miles in length, the grass short and greene, and in divers parts groves of trees by themselves, as if they had been by all the art and labour in the world so made of purpose.'¹

Embarking again we proceed onward through thin bush for a mile or two until the creek has dwindled almost to a brook. In some places it is so shallow that the paddles have to be used as poles, while every now and again we graze the bottom. Now we arrive at another open savannah, the creek becomes too shallow for our craft, and we stick in the mud. Nothing remains but for the boatmen to get out and push us along, which they soon do, plunging in above their knees, holding the sides of the *bateau*, and stumbling in the mud and water as they best can. We slide along easy enough, as the men take short steps to prevent sinking too far, and are soon at our destination.

Before us is a landing with several wood-skins moored to upright poles, showing that habitations and men are not far off, while a path leading up the sand-hill in front indicates the way to the Indian village. Our boatmen are tired after their long spell of paddling, while all the party are prepared for a good meal, not having eaten anything save a few biscuits during the journey. We therefore hasten up the clean path, down which a small stream of water is flowing, and soon catch sight of the three sheds, or benabs, which form the village. Only a shelter from the rain is required, and this is easily obtained in the forest. A few poles driven into the ground, other sticks for rafters, and a roof of palm thatch, all fastened by small bush ropes, can be erected in a few

¹ *Discoverie of Guiana.*

hours. No walls are required, and therefore neither windows nor doors, and the benab, with all its belongings, is open. In the olden time, when the Arawacks were in continual fear of their mortal enemies the Caribs, stockades were erected round at least one large benab, but now there is not the slightest sign of a defence.

The only occupant of our creek village is an old woman, who sits quietly weaving a hammock, and hardly appears to notice us as we crowd round and ask her to sell us cassava bread, barbecued game, or pepper-pot. She cannot understand a word of English, but at last gets up and walks along a path leading into the forest. We guess that she is going to call some of her friends, and follow her until we arrive at a clearing, where a dozen women and boys are weeding the provision ground. Our wants are made known to a boy who understands enough for the purpose, and we are soon back under the benabs with cakes of cassava bread and hunches of labba meat in our hands.

The furnishings of the Indian's house are very few. Slung to the rafters are a dozen hammocks—the beds, couches, chairs, and, in fact, only real articles of furniture. Here are the kitchen utensils: goglets for water, and the universal pepper-pot made of clay and blackened in the fire; a flat disc of iron for baking cassava cakes, and the snake-like metapee to squeeze out the poisonous juice from the pulp before baking; and the barbecue of sticks above the fire, where almost every kind of meat and fish is placed when brought home, to prevent their spoiling. Finally a bow and arrows, and the cutlasses or machetes just laid down by the weeders, close the list of the Indian's belongings, except what he wears, which is of little consequence. The adult men of this village are hunting and have carried their guns with them, but the women and children have no fear, although they appear very shy, and show their antipathy to the negro boatmen in many ways.

This feeling of dislike to the negro seems almost instinctive to the Indian. In Demerara, where the great rivers are lined with negro huts, he lives in the most inaccessible parts of the creeks, where only a light wood-skin or bark canoe can be paddled. He appears to retire simply from dislike to the noisy and boisterous manners of the negro, who makes himself too free with the Indian's property, and sometimes interferes with his women. The aborigines of Guiana are very liberal to a stranger, sometimes

giving away all they have, and the negroes take advantage of this and soon become overbearing.

While lounging in our hammocks, which are slung under one of the benabs, the men returned from hunting, one carrying an ant-bear, another a labba, and a third a few fish. They are very friendly in their own quiet way, and one of the party wishing to take a walk in the forest manages, after a great deal of trouble, to make them understand he wants a guide. Taking his gun, the naked aborigine stalks along at a good swinging pace, putting the white man on his mettle, and is soon in the dense forest. Here fast walking is difficult on account of the unevenness of the tree roots and ooziess of the mud between them, but the Indian keeps on at an even pace, leaving his follower some distance behind. Now and again the guide is lost to sight, and as his footsteps are quite noiseless it is impossible to know where he has gone. A call brings him back, but as he cannot understand that he must go slower, a few minutes later the white man is again left alone.

On one such occasion the report of a gun showed that the guide was looking after his own business, and presently he returned with a dead parrot. Now a small creek is reached, across which lies a palm-stem of only a few inches in diameter, on which the Indian steps lightly, and passes to the other side. He is going on when a call from his companion brings him back. The white man cannot think of attempting such a feat with wet boots and a slippery log, and tries to explain that he wants to return; but the Indian simply takes him in his arms and crosses over as easily as if he were another Blondin. After a great deal of trouble the guide at last understands that his companion is tired and can go no farther, so they return, the Indian quite cool and the white man flushed and perspiring at every pore.

Those who have only seen Indians in town can hardly conceive how perfectly at home they are in the forest. In streets and among crowds they are out of their element, and appear dull and heavy. As they file along the pavement, perhaps headed by one who wears a tall hat and a blue shirt, a stranger might almost fancy them near akin to the half-idiots seen here and there in most English towns. But see them in the forest or on the river, and the case is reversed. Here the white man is the fool, but he is never ridiculed by the polite denizen of the forest. Black and white laugh at the savage when he parades the streets, but he is

always ready to help them in the more difficult walking through the forest.

Our friend following his Indian guide felt very insignificant and foolish. Here was a man that he had hitherto thought of as a child, actually making him know his own inferiority. It was not a very pleasant experience, but it made him sympathise with the next party he met in town, instead of laughing at them. As the resident in a city knows its streets, so the Indian knows the forest. Every undulation of the ground, every watercourse, and almost every tree for miles is familiar to him. Unlike the white man in a strange town, he finds no friendly policeman to show the way, but has to seek it out for himself. As a natural consequence, his faculties are well developed in this special direction. Doubtless his observations would be particularly interesting to the naturalist, but even when he understands English his knowledge can hardly be communicated. All uncivilised races are more or less incapable of unveiling their thoughts and deeper feelings. Language fails them, and nothing is so unsatisfactory as an attempt to dive into their motives. Civilised men can generally give reasons for their actions, but, like children, the savage is rarely able to do this.

In the village everything is quiet. There is no bustle, nor does it appear that the Indians gossip much among themselves. Even the boys are grave, taking life seriously like their elders. Their games consist mostly of imitations of shooting and hunting, and practising with the bow. From childhood they learn to manage a little canoe, and are often seen quite alone far down the creek. They can swim and paddle almost as soon as walk, and look like bronze statuettes in their little rickety wood-skins.

It being now time to leave if we wished to get out of the creek before nightfall, we bid farewell to our Indian friends; and are soon floating down the stream. Very little paddling is necessary, but the greatest attention is paid to the steering. As we get beyond the savannahs the stream runs like a rapid, and, the tide being low, hundreds of snags, or *tacoobas*, are seen lying in the bed of the creek. Projecting from either side, across the current, and at all angles on the muddy bottom, they are very dangerous. Not that anyone has ever been drowned in such a place—the water is too shallow for that; but it is a very serious thing to have your *bateau* stove in and be left in the bush without a craft. To reach a clearing on foot would be a very serious undertaking.

even though it might be only a mile or two distant. The forest is bad enough, but the neighbourhood of a clearing can only be appreciated by one who has seen it, and had to cut his way through the jungle.

However, we get through with a few bumps, and after a final rush at the mouth of the creek, arrive safely in the Demerara river, and soon leave the creek far behind. But in our homes and offices the memory of the forest often flashes across our minds, and when trouble and difficulty stare us in the face, the quiet life of the Indian seems very attractive.

THE DICTATOR.

THE sun shone with a scorching glare that speedily parched tongue and throat, and made one pant for breath.

The handsome-looking plaster-covered buildings were dazzlingly white, and almost blinded one with their reflected brightness, so that, upon coming out of the sunshine of the streets into the somewhat cooler shade under the trees in the square, everything looked blurred and yellow for some time.

Through the middle of the square ran a promenade, covered with some fine crumbly white limestone, and in the centre of the promenade, equidistant from either end, was the fountain, sparkling and shimmering, and at its base, where the spray was thickest, the red and orange colours of a gorgeous miniature rainbow.

The water fell with a splash, splash, trickle, trickle—sounds delicious in their cool suggestiveness. The water was brought miles and miles for this costly fountain. The poor might thirst sometimes—what did it matter?—but the fountain must run, and the water from it trickle away through leaky drains into the porous sandy soil.

The few Englishmen left in the Republic called it the Dictator's Squirt. The natives didn't call it anything in particular. They shrugged their shoulders when they thought of the money squandered, but didn't often think about it; they were used to that sort of thing. Among other things, they rejoiced in a paper currency, composed largely of I O U's, written by themselves and mostly very dirty and nearly illegible.

No sound save that of the falling water and the monotone of humming insects broke the hot stillness. A strange quietness hung over the place. All along the sides of the promenade and on the coarse grass borders were numbers of men and women lying, some well dressed, some in white, some in all the colours of the rainbow, and some again were mere dirty scarecrows.

Viewing the scene from a distance, one might have thought they were sleeping after some carousal. They were all indeed sleeping the same quiet sleep. They were dead. The gravel walks were stained red, fast darkening with the heat. The blood

mixed with the gravel was sticky yet, but the sun would soon harden it and blacken it. A gorgeously-coloured butterfly whose tints glistened with metallic lustre would occasionally settle upon a poor lifeless body, and then flutter away again, heavily and lazily, in among the glossy and brilliantly green foliage.

The leaves of some of the trees were so bright and polished that one sometimes wondered why they didn't chink and rattle when a breeze shook them. In the far distance were the hills, clear and distinct, and deep purple blue, and above was the sky, a lighter blue.

The irregular tramp of feet could be heard, and then appeared a handsome man, with thin regular features which formed themselves into a disdainful, half-sneering smile. He was dressed in the then prevailing English fashion—tall black hat, white waistcoat, and black frock-coat, tightly-fitting blue trousers, and light gaiters.

Behind him slouched along half-a-dozen or more soldiers of the Republic, wearing dark-green red-striped trousers and green jackets. Surely these soldiers were the most villainous-looking six that ever marched together; cunning, dark-eyed, and suspicious, each looked as though he could do murder on the slightest provocation.

Their leader was the Dictator.

South American republics have a decided objection to being tyrannised over by anything less than a Dictator. Then when they get tired of tyranny and peace they have a little war and bloodshed. Sometimes they triumph, and elect another Dictator, to be knocked down when they get tired of him. Sometimes the Dictator proves victorious, and then he generally takes a bath in blood.

This was the case now.

Coming along in the other direction was a little nigger boy. He had no business there, and moreover he was laughing at something. The Dictator looked wicked. The sound irritated him, which was bad for the little nigger boy.

When the lad came upon the soldiers he stopped laughing, and looked up in surprise, showing the whites of his eyes.

The Dictator stepped up to him and asked a question in Spanish. The boy looked up at him; his face lost the surprised look and broadened into a grin. He evidently didn't understand Spanish.

Now, the Dictator is the greatest man in the Republic, and each Republic is the greatest ever seen; the whole world watches it with envy.

So the Dictator coolly drew a sword from the scabbard of the soldier nearest him and sliced off one side of the black boy's face, including the ear. The blood dripped down on to his shoulder and soaked the thin grey cotton jacket. The boy looked up with a piteous expression, mutely imploring like a dog, and sank slowly on to his knees. 'Grinning yet,' sneered the Dictator in Spanish. Another vicious stroke and his head was divided in two as far as the nose. He fell forward on his breast, with arms stretched out straight in front of him.

Then the Dictator returned the sword to his follower, and with his handkerchief carefully wiped off, as well as he was able, a spot or two of blood that had spattered his waistcoat. Then the party continued their tour of inspection.

The day wore on and darkened into night; the subdued hoarse roar of the distant sea could be heard. Fireflies danced about like erratic stars; some bird or beast in the distance uttered a doleful cry in a minor key; a bat flapped about overhead, and the fountain still plashed musically.

The night was not dark, and among other shadows was one that moved about. It was the father come to look for his son. Perhaps he was a slave from the uplands—who knows?

He found his poor little boy, and bent over him for some time without uttering a sound. Then he took him up tenderly in his arms and bore him off, uttering a low moan the while.

I first met the Dictator some years after this. I was going round the world for pleasure by easy stages. The vessel I was on was a slow-going steam tramp. We put into the principal harbour of the Republic, but were not even allowed to land, and were searched from stem to stern, the object of the search being this same Dictator. The captain waxed wroth at the indignity, but submitted. There had been a revolution; the Dictator had fled. Across the dancing sunlit water we could see houses and public buildings in the town still smouldering.

We left the harbour next morning, and discovered, before we were very far out, we had a stowaway—the Dictator. The captain came to me and told me about it.

'He's the biggest brute unshot,' said the captain; 'but to

send him back would be sheer murder, and I'm not going to do it. But the first place we come to that's not too hot to hold him, off he goes !'

The captain said the man knew English well, and so I found. But it was the English of the slums, plentifully interspersed with oaths. From whom he had learnt it I know not. Choice fellows they must have been, at any rate.

I announced my intention of going to look at him.

'He's a polished scoundrel,' said the captain, 'and I wish they had caught him. I'll let him know who's dictator aboard this ship, any way. The way he lets out the most beastly language with the most polite air in the world raises your eyebrows.'

I saw him later on under the yellow light of the lamp in the cabin: olive-complexioned, straight-featured, much-moustached, handsome.

He was polite—much too polite to be sincere; offered me a chair and a cigarette, his black eyes following me about as I moved. I am sure I don't know why, but I felt uncomfortable each time he looked at me.

He suggested a game of chess, and the two of us sat down to play. I had the worst of the game from the first.

The captain came in and watched us, his big red beard and his open bronzed face offering a singular contrast to the dark, cunning, and handsome mask opposite.

Then George, the black, came in with a glass of grog for the captain, and stood a moment behind me, watching the game. The Dictator glanced up out of the corners of his eyes, and without any warning took up the glass that had just been set down and shied it past my head at George, the grog flying out in a circle.

'D—n you!' roared the captain. He grabbed the Dictator by the collar and shook him until I thought his head would have rolled off or his eyes have been joggled out. 'I'll chuck you into the sea, you little brute!' shouted the captain in his wrath.

Then he let the Dictator drop, looking like a bundle of loose clothes. He got up slowly, saying nothing, but his black eyes flashing as he pulled down his soiled cuffs from under his coat-sleeves and settled his coat on his back.

I left him twirling his black moustache and showing his white teeth beneath it.

I was talking to the first mate the next morning, when I

learned that the Dictator had shown his ungovernable temper again, and the captain had clapped him in irons.

‘Serve the darned little black villain right too,’ said the mate — ‘wants chawing up, and the cap’n’s the boy to do it.’

We came to a very curious place, about which there has since been some talk in the scientific world. It was an island, and of some extent too, being about one mile from north to south, and half that from east to west. It had arisen in the course of a night to astonish and perplex mariners. That the island was volcanic there were many evidences, as was proved later on, and on the mainland, about a league distant, a small crater had been formed, and was pouring lava down. Then, too, there were two or three enormous chasms. These gaps in the solid crust of the earth ran for miles, and hundreds of feet down was molten lava, that swashed sullenly about, and sometimes the confined gas would burst through it, and the rumble it made could be heard on board the ship. Above these cracks hung thick, heavy vapours, and marked their course across the country for miles.

We couldn’t see the lava because of the vapour, but we could hear it; and at night it illuminated the smoke and gas hanging above, forming dull red streaks across the face of the land, which sometimes wavered about when the breeze happened to be fresh.

Of course we landed to have a look at these phenomena. What reason we recorded for doing so I don’t know.

The Dictator was released from his irons that morning, and was pacing the deck when we were putting off for the shore.

‘Kindly intercede for me with the brave captain, Signor Smith,’ said he, addressing me. ‘I will be merry as a lark, and quiet, verra quiet—no rows.’

‘Very well, come aboard, and look sharp,’ said the captain.

He did as he was bid without more ado, and we made for the shore.

Though the morning was yet young, it was hot—miserably hot—and no wind stirring. The shore was a desert of shifting sand, with a few low and bare sandhills here and there. Further on we could see the country, almost a desert, with bits of scrubby brushwood scattered about, parched and frizzled up; no water anywhere, save the sea, as far as we could make out.

The first thing we noticed when we had left the beach behind was a coating of extremely fine dust, nearly an inch thick in

places, and covering everything. If one was not careful in stepping, a cloud of it was raised by a kick, and it was so fine it got into the lungs and nearly choked one. I took up a handful of it, but it was so hot with the sun I scattered it again.

Now the Dictator was not so well dressed as usual—still neat with regard to his clothes, but without shoes or socks. He had been so on deck when he had craved permission to come, and had come just as he was. I think he must have found it pretty warm walking.

We peered round and poked our noses over the chasms. They were just as I have described them.

Then we missed the Dictator; he was nowhere within sight.

‘I expect he’s scooted off if he knows the country at all,’ I said.

‘Don’t think so,’ said the captain. ‘We’re hundreds of miles from anywhere or anybody, and an ant couldn’t live much anywhere round here. I hope we have lost him.’

I scraped away some of the hot top-sand and dust, and sat down while the captain went further afield, exploring a bit. I didn’t answer him; it was too hot, and I felt almost too lazy to move at all.

The captain was soon out of sight. I expect he got tired of exploring, and went back to the boat. I was just thinking of doing so also when suddenly there broke upon my sight from round the base of a sandhill a man running at full speed, his face white and terrified-looking, and wet with perspiration.

‘Hullo! where are you off?’ I cried.

He stopped suddenly in his wild career and regarded me perplexedly.

It was the Dictator, with bare and bleeding feet, and the hot ashes caked the blood on the raw places.

His trousers were jagged and torn short just below the knees, and showed his thin legs. Beads of sweat ran along his long nose and dropped off one by one. He looked at me perplexedly, and rubbed that aquiline nose of his meditatively with a long forefinger. Then he laughed a crazy laugh.

‘The devil’s after the Dictator!’ he said.

His eyes didn’t look right, and I said to myself, ‘He’s mad with the sun.’ His aristocratic, clean-cut features were streaked with dirt, and glistened in the sun.

‘The devil—he caught me by the legs, and howled; he did shriek!’

He had forgotten me altogether, and was muttering to himself.

'Look here, you lean scarecrow! you'd better come along and get on board,' I said.

Just then I heard some unearthly shrieks, and from the same sandhill where the Dictator first appeared rushed a negro, his arms moving like the sails of a windmill, and even at that distance I could see the whites of his eyes, and that he was blowing and snorting like a horse. In his left hand was a long, curved knife that flashed in the sun.

'The devil!' screamed the Dictator, a look of abject fear coming into his eyes once again. He started to run, taking short strides and going at top speed.

'Where are you going?' I shouted after him, and started running too.

'Down below!' he yelled, turning his head over his shoulder; and as he ran he laughed a short, despairing laugh, the very mockery of laughter.

They were both ahead of me now, the black brandishing his knife and yelling. The upper part of his body was quite bare, and glistened in the sun. Dust rose from their feet as they ran, and drifted along the ground in low clouds.

The black was gaining rapidly on the Dictator. Then I remembered they were rushing along in the direction of the freshly-opened chasm. I stopped running, and shouted after them with all the wind I had left. The black was now almost upon the Dictator, and I saw the gleam of his knife as he raised it in the air. Then both suddenly dropped out of sight. As far as one could see there was now no living thing for miles around, only the sandy desert with its patches of loose grey pumice-dust, a few scattered and dust-covered skeletons of horses and cattle, the cloudless sky and the blazing sun.

I walked slowly down to the beach, and there found the boat. The captain had gone aboard. George, the captain's black, was missing.

That was the last of the Dictator.

*UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF CHARLES AND
MARY LAMB.*

THE interest of published letters is ordinarily held to depend either on the writer or the matter written. It is more difficult than may at first sight appear to decide which is the more attractive feature, but it is certain that, where the two are combined, we realise this class of writing in its perfection.

There are, doubtless, many epistolary relics of the Lambs, brother and sister, which are trivial enough, and which, had they proceeded from the pen of an obscure or uninteresting person, might be in danger of committal to the waste-basket, just as there are specimens of correspondence by inferior writers which are only redeemed from neglect because their merit is purely intrinsic.

The additions which have accrued to the Lamb letters during the last twenty years, as well in the discovery or recovery of lost as in the collation of known ones, are certainly very extensive and gratifying. The Manning series is said to be at present in the United States, and should be compared with the printed text. The same may be predicated of the Coleridge series, which is still, we believe, in England. Of the letters to Rickman several remain unprinted. But a vast deal has been accomplished, on the whole, in the way of rehabilitation since Talfourd died.

Letters, and long letters too, to hitherto unrecognised acquaintances, revealing fresh aspects of Lamb's character and humour, have formed part of this treasure-trove. Take, for instance, the two letters of 1817 and 1818 to C. and J. Chambers respectively. No one suspected their existence till they occurred in the collection of the late Mr. Henry Bohn; and we now understand that they are only part of a series. The latter is printed (imperfectly) by Canon Ainger; the former has just been given in the columns of an English contemporary. It is, in the main, an elaborate disquisition on the comparative recommendations of John-dory, Brighton turbot, and cod's head and shoulders, and is assuredly a masterpiece of its kind. It is an epicurean essay, powerfully illustrating the writer's versatility at what may be deemed in some respects the finest and most matured period

of his literary career. There is nothing finer in *Elia*. The letter is all the more delightfully humorous because it is couched throughout in a perfectly grave tone. The similitude in one place of a cod's head and shoulders from its flakiness to a *sea-onion* is unique. But the whole production deserves study.

Far different in value and charm are the specimens of Lamb's intercourse upon paper, which constitute the most material part of our present contribution to this subject; and yet the difference may be said, perhaps, to be only in kind.

The readers of the Lamb letters can hardly fail to have become familiar with the name of NORRIS. Lamb knew him as he knew none besides. He was his and his father's friend for nearly half a century, he tells Southey in 1823. When John Lamb became so that he was scarcely any longer a companion, Norris was next—in a sense, he was nearer. When the mother fell by the daughter's hand, Charles wrote to Coleridge (Sept. 27, 1796): 'Mr. Norris, of the Bluecoat School, has been very kind to us, and *we have no other friend.*'

In his next communication to the same, a few days later, he says: 'Mr. Norris, of Christ's Hospital, has been as a father to me, Mrs. Norris as a mother, though we had few claims on them.'

In the Christmas of 1825 Norris lay on his dying bed. Ever since his boyhood Lamb had spent that day with him and Mrs. Norris. He came from witnessing the closing scene in the saddest of moods, and the trouble and sense of bereavement were such as he had never before experienced. He writes to Crabb Robinson, January 20, 1826: 'In him I have a loss the world cannot make up. He was my friend and my father's friend all the life I can remember. I seem to have made foolish friendships ever since. Those are friendships which outlast a second generation. Old as I am waxing, in his eyes I was still the child he first knew me. To the last he called me Charley. I have none to call me Charley now. He was the last link that bound me to the Temple. You are but of yesterday.'

Norris had very special claims on Lamb's tender and enduring regard. Even when he was a little shy, delicate school-boy, the under-treasurer at the Temple, his father's friend, used to procure him *exceats* extraordinary from the Christ's Hospital precinct, and enable him to enjoy many a half-holiday either in Crown Office Row or under his own roof; and Lamb furnishes more than a hint that this favouritism was rather apt to kindle in the bosoms

of those who had no such good fairy at hand a passing sentiment of jealousy, more particularly as poor Aunt Hetty used also to bring to the cloisters just about the dinner-hour, when there was something more than usually savoury at her brother's frugal table, a plate of viands wrapped up in a kerchief, and sit down in a corner, kind soul, while the child ate his home-perfumed meal.

It seemed almost requisite to preface what follows with this exordium, since there may be some who would not at once appreciate the peculiar importance of the little batch of letters, such as they are, in the presence of such an imposing array of correspondence with some of the most eminent characters of the age. But these stand *per se*, as Mr. and Mrs. Norris did.

There is a further consideration to be offered in this case. The letters of Mary Lamb here first published belong to the period of her chequered and prolonged life when her correspondence is of the rarest occurrence, and from the last item in the series it will be apparent that they were among her latest efforts to put her thoughts on paper. She did not long survive the note which Miss James addressed on her behalf to Miss Norris.

We may be right in ascribing the postponement of any knowledge that letters passed between the Lambs and the oldest of their friends to the presumed absence of any sympathy with literary matters on the part of Norris and his family; and the surprising part, perhaps, is that they should have been preserved even in rather indifferent condition.

THE HITHERTO UNKNOWN NORRIS CORRESPONDENCE.

I.

To Mrs. Norris.

'DEAR MRS. N.,—Mary will be in town this Even^g or to-morrow morn^g. As she wants to see you about another business. She will in the meantime enquire respecting the young woman.

'Yours sincerely,

'C. LAMB.

'E. I. H.

'26 Mar. 1822.

'Mrs. Norris,

'Tanfield Court, Temple.'

II.

The next in order of date was seemingly despatched by Lamb soon after their return from France in 1825, when he was still labouring under the humorous idiosyncrasy of interlarding his sentences

with very bad French, or rather an Anglo-French doggrel of his own. Our text follows the original among the Norris papers:—

To Miss Norris.

[No superscription.]

[1825.]

‘Hypochondriac. We can’t reckon avec any certainty for une heure . . . as follows :

England.

‘I like the Taxes when they’re not too many,
I like a sea-coal fire when not too dear ;
I like a beefsteak, too, as well as any,
Have no objection to a pot of beer ;
I like the *weather when it’s not too rainy*,
That is, I like two months of every year.

Italy.

‘I also like to dine on Bacaficas,
To see the sun set, sure he’ll rise to-morrow,
Not through a misty morning twinkling weak as
A drunken man’s dead eye in maudlin sorrow.
But with all heaven and himself that day will break as
Beauteous, as cloudless, nor be forced to borrow
That sort of farthing candlelight which glimmers
Where reeking London’s smoky cauldron simmers.

‘Kind regards to Mama & remembrances to Frere Richard.
Dieu remercie mon frere can’t lizer Fransay. I have written this letter with a most villainous pen—called a Patent one.

‘En finis je remarque I was not offensé a votre fransay et I was not embarrassé to make it out. Adieu.

‘I have not quite done that——instead of your company in Miss Norris ; epistle has determined me to come if heaven, earth & myself can compass it. Amen.’

[No signature.]

III.

Mary Lamb to Mrs. Norris.

The succeeding letter from Miss Lamb furnishes a curious account and picture of the brother’s and sister’s experiences in one of their seaside holiday excursions, posterior to that of 1823, when we know that they also went to Hastings. It is in the writer’s usual manner—frank, gossiping, and affectionate :—

'Hastings, at Mrs. Gibbs, York Cottage, Priory, No. 4. [1825-6.]

'MY DEAR FRIEND,—Day after day has passed away, and my brother has said "I will write to Mrs. Norris to-morrow," and therefore I am resolved to write to *Mrs. Norris* to-day, and trust him no longer. We took our places for Sevenoaks, intending to remain here all night in order to see Knole, but when we got there we chang'd our minds, and went on to Tunbridge Wells. About a mile short of the Wells the coach stopped at a little inn, and I saw lodgings to let on a little, very little house opposite. I ran over the way, and secured them before the coach drove away, and we took immediate possession: it proved a very comfortable place, and we remained there nine days. The first evening, as we were wandering about, we met a lady, the wife of one of the India House clerks, with whom we had been slightly acquainted some years ago, which slight acquaintance has been ripened into a great intimacy during the nine pleasant days that we passed at the Wells. She and her two daughters went with us in an open chaise to Knole, and as the chaise held only five, we mounted Miss James upon a little horse, which she rode famously. I was very much pleased with Knole, and still more with Penshurst, which we also visited. We saw Frant and the Rocks, and made much use of your Guide Book, only Charles lost his way once going by the map. We were in constant exercise the whole time, and spent our time so pleasantly that when we came here on Monday we missed our new friends and found ourselves very dull. We are by the seaside in a *still less* house, and we have exchanged a very pretty landlady for a very ugly one, but she is equally attractive to us. We eat turbot, and we drink smuggled Hollands, and we walk up hill and down hill all day long. In the little intervals of rest that we allow ourselves I teach Miss James french; she picked up a few words during her foreign Tour with us, and she has had a hankering after it ever since.

'We came from Tunbridge Wells in a Postchaise, and would have seen Battle Abbey on the way, but it is only shewn on a Monday. We are trying to coax Charles into a Monday's excursion. And Bexhill we are also thinking about. Yesterday evening we found out by chance the most beautiful view I think I ever saw. It is called 'The Lovers' Seat.' . . . You have been here, therefore you must have seen [it, or] is it only Mr. and Mrs. Faint who have visited Hastings? [Tell Mrs.] Faint that though

in my haste to get housed I d[ecided on] . . . ice's lodgings, yet it comforted all th. . . to know that I had a place in view.

'I suppose you are so busy that it is not fair to ask you to write me a line to say how you are going on. Yet if any one of you have half an hour to spare for that purpose, it will be most thankfully received. Charles joins with me in love to you all together, and to each one in particular upstairs and downstairs.

'Yours most affectionately,

'M. LAMB.

'June 18.

'[Endorsed]: Randal Norris, Esq.,

'Inner Temple, London.

'For Mrs. N.'

IV.

There is an interval of a full decade between the last letter and those which follow, and which illustrate more or less valuably the latest years as well of Charles as of his sister.

It is possible that some intervening matter has disappeared, but let us bear in mind that Lamb—nay, both, were rather spasmodic in their communications all round, especially towards the last.

Here is a note to Mrs. Norris, enclosing one which had come from Jekyll, acknowledging the receipt of a gift of the second series of *Elia*. Autograph-collectors will mark what is said of their pursuit! Emma is of course Miss Isola, afterward Mrs. Moxon.

Charles Lamb to Mrs. Norris.

'DEAR MRS. NORRIS,—I wrote to Jekyll, and sent him an *Elia*. This is his kind answer. So you see that he will be glad to see *any of you* that shall be in town, and will arrange, if you prefer it, to accompany you. If you are at Brighton, Betsey will forward this. I have cut off the name at the bottom to give to a foolish autograph fancier. Love to you all. Emma sends her very kindest.

'C. LAMB.

'[Postmarked]: July 10, 1833.'

[*Enclosure.*]

MY DEAR SIR,—I must not lose A moment in thanking you for another volume of your delightful pen, which reached me this Morning, but I hope not the last Essays of *Elia*.

'For Faint I had much Regard, and it delights me to hear he

has manifested such good Feelings towards Mrs. Norris and her Daughters. On their Visit to London, it would afford me much pleasure to see them, and, still more, if you could contrive to accompany them.

‘Poor George Dyer, blind, but as usual chearful and content, often gives, on my Enquiry, good accounts of you. With my Regards to Mrs. Norris,

[Signature cut off.]

‘Spring Garden,
‘Thursday, June 27, 1833.
‘C. Lamb, Esq.’

The excessive rarity of letters addressed to the Lambs is probably well known; it proceeded from the habit of destroying everything of the kind after perusal; and the present only escaped by being forwarded to a friend.

V.

When the next subscribed *Elia* was written, Lamb had paid a visit to Mrs. and Miss Norris at Widford, near Ware, and it is manifest that they, or one of them, had expressed, perhaps for the first time in all these years, a desire to see some of his literary productions:—

The Same to the Same.

‘Mrs. Walden’s, Church Street, Edmonton. [July 18, 1833.]

‘DEAR MRS. NORRIS,—I got home safe. Pray accept these little books, and some of you *give me a line to say you received them.* Love to all, and thanks for three agreeable days. I send them this afternoon (Tuesday) by Canter’s coach. Are the little girls packed safe? They can come in straw, and have eggs under them. Ask them to lie soft, ‘cause eggs smash.

‘ELIA.’

‘The first volume printed here [‘Poetry for Children’] is not to be had for love or money, not even an American edition of it, and the second volume, American also, to suit with it. It is much the same as the London one.’

VI.

We are not at liberty to question that Lamb was again at Widford in the last year of his life, and that he there drew up,

for the information of his entertainers, a bibliography of his works as follows:—

“Blank Verse” (with C. Lloyd).

“Rosamund Gray,” a tale.

“John Woodvil,” a tragedy.

Those 3 printed separately, together with Poems and Essays, & “Mr. H.,” a farce, were collected in two volumes call’d “Works of C. Lamb.”

“Album Verses.”

“Elia’s Essays.”

“Last Essays of Elia.”

“Adventures of Ulysses.”

“Poetry (with Mary L.).

“Tales of Shaksp.” (Do.)

“Mrs. Leicester’s School.” (Do.)

} all for Children,

besides “The Pawnbroker’s Daughter,” a farce, and numberless nonsense, prose and *worse*, scatter’d about in Magazines and Newspapers, never got together, irrepa[ra]bly gone to oblivion.

‘These are all the follies I can remember just now.

‘C. LAMB.

‘Widford, 3 Nov. 1834.’

VII.

On his return from this second visit he made up a package of all such of his own books as he could find at home, and sent them off to Widford.

The Same to the Same.

‘[Edmonton: November, 1834.]

‘DEAR MRS. NORRIS,—I found Mary on my return not worse, and she is now no better. I send all my nonsense I could scrape together, and wish your young ladies well thro’ them. I hope they will like “Amwell.” Be in no hurry to return them. Six months hence will do. Remember me kindly to them and to Richard. Also to Mary and her cousin.

‘Yours truly,

‘C. LAMB.

‘Pray give me a line to say you receiv’d ’em. I send ’em Wednesday 19th, from the Roebuck.’

About six *weeks* subsequently to this note Lamb died (December 26, 1834), and we have now to do with three letters

which derive their principal importance from being, as we apprehend, the only remaining documents illustrating the last days of Charles's sister and life-companion. When the third was written by Miss James, the old and faithful attendant recommended by the Kenneys, Miss Lamb was no longer capable, it may be more than inferred, of using her pen, and was not in a state of mind to bear much conversation or any excitement.

We have presented Lamb himself, for the first time, in the character of a bibliographer; but it is reserved for us to bring under notice a small volume, which we suppose to have been by Mary, and of which the copy before us was presented by her to Mrs. Norris. We have never seen it named in any of the memoirs of her or her brother. The title and other particulars are as follow, and it will be at once observed that it was published by a law-stationer in the Temple—an additional proof of its Elian origin:—

‘POEMS. BY A SISTER.

‘Indulge my votive strain,
O sweet humanity!—LANGHORNE.

‘London: Printed for and sold by J. Walsh, Law-Stationer, Inner-Temple-lane—[and others] 1812. Small 8°, pp. 119 + XLIV. + half title and Contents, 2 leaves.’

VIII.

Mary Lamb to Miss Norris.

‘[41 Alpha Road, Regent's Park] Christmas Day [1841.]

‘MY DEAR JANE,—Many thanks for your kind presents—your Michalmas goose. I thought Mr. Moxon had written to thank you—the turkeys and nice apples came yesterday.

‘Give my love to your dear Mother. I was unhappy to find your note in the basket, for I am always thinking of you all, and wondering when I shall ever see any of you again.

‘I long to shew you what a nice snug place I have got into—in the midst of a pleasant little garden. I have a room for myself and my old books on the ground floor, and a little bedroom up two pairs of stairs. When you come to town, if you have not time to go [to] the Moxons, an Omnibus from the Bell and Crown in Holborn would [bring] you to our door in [a] quarter of an hour. If your dear Mother does not venture so far, I will contrive to pop down to see [her]. Love and all seasonable wishes to your sister and Mary, &c. I am in the midst of many

friends—Mr. & Mrs. Kenney, Mr. & Mrs. Hood, Bar[r]on Field & his brother Frank, & their wives &c., all within a short walk.

‘If the lodger is gone, I shall have a bedroom will hold two! Heaven bless & preserve you all in health and happiness many a long year.

‘Yours affectionately,

‘M. A. LAMB.

‘[Endorsed]: Miss Jane Norris,

‘Widford, near Ware, Hertfordshire.’

IX.

The Same to the Same.

‘Oct. 3, 1842.

‘MY DEAR JANE NORRIS,—Thanks, many thanks, my dear friend, for your kind remembrances. What a nice Goose! That, and all its accompaniments in the basket, we all devoured; the two legs fell to my share!!!

‘Your chearful [letter,] my Jane, made me feel “almost as good as new.”

‘Your Mother and I *must meet again*. Do not be surprized if I pop in again for a half-hour’s call some fine frosty morning.

‘Thank you, dear Jane, for the happy tidings that my *old* friend Miss Bangham is alive, an[d] that Mary is still with you, unmarried. Heaven bless you all.

‘Love to Mother, *Betsey*, Mary, &c. How I do long to see you.

‘I am always your affec^{ately} grateful friend,

‘MARY ANN LAMB.

‘No. 41. A[l]pha Road,

‘[Endorsed in another hand]:

‘Miss Jane Norris,

‘Goddard House, Widford,

‘near Haddum [Hadham], Herts.’

X.

Miss James to Miss Norris.

‘41 Alpha Road, Regent’s Park, London :

July 25, 1843.

‘MADAM,—Miss Lamb having seen the Death of your dear Mother in the times News Paper is most anxious to hear from or to see one of you, as she wishes to know how you intend settling yourselves, and to have a full account of your dear Mother’s last

illness. She was much shocked on reading of her death, and appeared very vexed that she had not been to see her, [and] wanted very much to come down and see you both; but we were really afraid to let her take the journey. If either of you are coming up to town, she would be glad if you would call upon her, but should you not be likely to come soon, she would be very much pleased, if one of you would have the goodness to write a few lines to her, as she is most anxious about you. She begs you to excuse her writing to you herself, as she don't feel equal to it; she asked me yesterday to write for her. I am happy to say she is at present pretty well, although your dear Mother's death appears to dwell much upon her mind. She desires her kindest love to you both, and hopes to hear from you very soon, if you are equal to writing. I sincerely hope you will oblige her, and am,

Madam,

Your obedient, &c.,

SARAH JAMES.

Pray don't invite her to come down to see you.

[Endorsed on envelope]

Miss Norris,

Goddard House, Widdford,
near Ware, Hertfordshire.

We now proceed to annex five hitherto inedited communications from Lamb himself—to Barron Field, John Taylor, where he introduces Hazlitt and the *London Magazine*, Charles Ollier, Moxon, and an anonymous lady correspondent and friend, perhaps a member of the Betham or Kenney family. In the first he introduces to his official friend in Thiefland an acquaintance of the Whites—not James White, but Edward of the India House—and mentions Leigh Hunt and the *Examiner*. The notes to Ollier and to the lady may be added to the existing series of light and jocose effusions already in print. The latter in its Gallicism carries evidence of having been written about the period of Lamb's return from his French trip in 1825. The recollection of the journey continued to linger for some time in the letters in the shape of scraps of the language of the country very much of the school of Stratford-at-Bow. In the lines addressed to Moxon we too readily discern one of those intervals of depression which marked the closing years.

XL.

To Barron Field.

'London: 16 Aug. 1820.

'DEAR FIELD,—Captain Ogilvie, who conveys this note to you, and is now paying for the first time a visit to your remote shores, is the brother of a Gentleman intimately connected with the family of the *Whites*, I mean of Bishopsgate Street—and you will much oblige them and myself by any service or civilities you can shew him.

'I do not mean this for an answer to your warm-hearted Epistle, which demands and shall have a much fuller return. We received your Australian First Fruits, of which I shall say nothing here, but refer you to * * * * [? Hunt] of the *Examiner*, who speaks our mind on all public subjects. I can only assure you that both Coleridge and Wordsworth, and also C. Lloyd, who has lately reappeared in the poetical horizon, were hugely taken with your Kangaroo.

'When do you come back full of riches and renown, with the regret of all the honest, and all the other part of the colony? Mary swears she shall live to see it.

'Pray are you King's or Queen's men in Sidney? Or have thieves no politics? Man, don't let this lie about your room for your bed sweeper or Major Domo to see, he mayn't like the last paragraph.

'This is a dull and lifeless scroll. You shall have soon a tissue of truth & fiction impossible to be extricated, the interleavings shall be so delicate, the partitions perfectly envisible [? indivisible], it shall puzzle you till you return, & [then] I will not explain it. Till then a . . . adieu, with kind rem^{brces} of me both to you & . . .

[Signature and a few words torn off.]

'B. Field, Esq.

[Endorsed]: Barron Field, Esq'.

'By favor of Capt^r Ogilvie.

XII.

To John Taylor.

'[July 21, 1821.

'DR. SIR,—The *Lond. Mag.* is chiefly pleasant to me, because some of my friends write in it. I hope Hazlitt intends to go on with it, we cannot spare Table Talk. For myself I feel almost

exhausted, but I will try my hand a little longer, and shall not at all events be written out of it by newspaper paragraphs. Your proofs do not seem to want my helping hand, they are quite correct always. For God's sake change *Sisera* to *Jael*. This last paper will be a choke-pear I fear to some people, but as you do not object to it, I can be under little apprehension of your exerting your Censorship too rigidly.

'Thanking you for your extract from Mr E.'s letter,

'I remain, Dr Sir,

'Your obliged,

'C. LAMB.

'Mess^{rs} Taylor & Hessey, Booksellers,

'Fleet Street.

'Mr Taylor.'

XIII.

To Charles Ollier.

'DEAR O.,—I send you 8 more jests, with the terms which my friend asks, which you will be so kind as to get an answer to from Colburn, that I may tell him whether to go on with them. You will see his short note to me at the end, and tear it off. It is not for me to judge, but, considering the scarceness of the materials, what he asks is, I think, mighty reasonable. *Do not let him be even known as a friend of mine.* You see what he says about 5 going in first as a trial, but these will make 13 in all. Tell me by what time he need send more, I suppose not for some time (if you do not bring 'em out this month).

'Keep a place for me till the middle of the month, for I cannot hit on anything yet. I meant nothing by my crotchets but extreme difficulty in writing. But I will go on as long as I can.

'C. LAMB.

'[Endorsed]: Mr Ollier,

'Mr Colburn's,

'New Burlington Street.

'[Postmarked]: Jan. 25 [?], 1826.'

XIV.

To a Lady.

'Many thanks for the wrap-rascal, but how delicate the insinuating in, into the pocket, of that 3½d., in paper too! Who was it? Amelia, Caroline, Julia, Augusta, or "Scots who have"?

'As a set-off to the very handsome present, which I shall lay out in a pot of ale certainly to *her* health, I have paid sixpence

for the mend of two button-holes of the coat now return'd. She shall not have to say, "I don't care a button for her."

'Adieu, très aimables!

	<i>d.</i>
'Buttons	6
'Gift	3½
	—
'due from —	2½

'which pray accept . . . from your foolish coat-forgetting

'C. L.'

XV.

To Edward Moxon.

'[Postmarked: July 12, 1832.]

'DEAR M.,—My hand shakes so, I can hardly say don't come yet. I have been worse to-day than you saw me. I am going to try water gruel & quiet if I can get it. But a visitor hast [*sic*] just been down, & another a day or two before, & I feel half frantic. I will write when better. Make excuses to Foster [*sic*] for the present.

'C. LAMB.

'Mr Moxon,

'64 New Bond Street.'

THE RISE OF TOWNS.

IT is with towns as with men : some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. A few resemble the old families described by Douglas Jerrold : like potatoes, their best part is underground ; as in the case, notably, of the poor old ghost of Silchester, which haunts the fields of Strathfieldsaye in Hampshire, and, less conspicuously, in that of various Cathedral cities and historic county towns. Other places with long and honourable pedigrees still flourish and increase ; these may be said to have been born great, so far as their life in the nineteenth century is concerned. Some towns have deliberately laid themselves out to be attractive, or the growth of manufactures, or a discovery of coal or iron in their neighbourhood, has raised them from obscurity to fame ; these may be considered to have achieved greatness. Yet another class has leaped suddenly into prominence through the rush to it of the outside public, who have discovered all at once the natural charms of some obscure village's position, or who have simply been thrust on to it by the overflow of some huge town adjacent ; these have had, literally, their greatness thrust upon them. There is romance in their histories, as there is in the history of a governing family, a man of genius, or a brilliant speculator.

Leaving aside the long pedigrees as beyond the scope of this article, let us look at the lives of some of our popular watering-places. Perhaps the most conspicuous example of a leap into fame is afforded by Bournemouth. It is little more than sixty years since Bournemouth was 'discovered,' its Columbus being a Dorsetshire gentleman named Tregonwell, who, struck by its natural charms and fine climate, built himself a villa among the pine woods, and sounded the praises of the place, a great part of which he owned. Other villas consequently sprang up, and in 1838, on Coronation Day, the foundation-stone of the first hotel, the Royal Bath, was laid ; but in gazetteers of forty years ago Bournemouth was not thought worthy of mention. A Board of Commissioners started the systematic development of the town in 1856. To-day its gardens and pine groves have a world-wide celebrity, its hotels and lodging-houses are numberless, and it is

thronged with visitors all the year round, from my lord or a royal highness on a winter sojourn to 'Arry on a day trip from London. The population at the last census was 37,650, an increase of 19,000 in the last ten years. Next to the rapid growth of the 'English Mentone' comes that of Eastbourne, which owes so much to the wisdom and enterprise of the late Duke of Devonshire. Forty years ago, Eastbourne was a quiet and genteel little spot, boasting a chalybeate spring, a ball-room, a library, and 3,000 inhabitants. Now it has nearly 35,000 people, having increased by 13,000 in ten years and by 25,000 in twenty years; and stands in the forefront of watering-places for sanitary and other modern improvements. Southport a hundred years ago was a range of sand-hills. This year marks its centenary, for in 1792 William Sutton built the first house in the place; it was an inn, and was called Sutton's Folly by those who thought that nobody would care to betake themselves to a desert. But Sutton knew what he was about, and out of the little stopping-place of bathers from Ormskirk and Wigan, the town he founded became Lancashire's most noted and flourishing sanatorium. Like Eastbourne it boasted 3,000 inhabitants in 1851, but after the influx of railways its growth was rapid; in 1871 the figures reached 18,000, in 1881 33,000, in 1891 43,000. The rambling old 'Folly' and its proprietor, locally known as 'the Old Duke,' are kept in memory by a handsome column erected at the junction of Lord and Duke Streets.

Southport has a vigorous rival in Blackpool, which in 1851 had only 1,300 inhabitants, including 590 visitors. Like Southport it began, not so much as a village as a bathing station; an hotel came to the assistance of the bathers, and soon lodging-houses, pier, and other allurements for visitors and trippers made the thing complete. It has now well on to 24,000 people—without including visitors, who do not flock to Blackpool in April—having added nearly 10,000 to its numbers in the last decade.

Torquay has a longer history, and its picturesque beauty was already becoming celebrated at the dawn of the century; but it was then only a charming village of a thousand people. Not until the seventies did it lay itself out with pier and winter-gardens and the like to attract visitors; and its advance has been rather steady and equable than sensational. The population now is over 25,500. A little while since Southsea and St. Leonards were known merely as pleasant and fashionable suburbs of Ports-

mouth and Hastings respectively; to-day they are gay and crowded watering-places on their own account; and Southsea, whose whole existence does not cover thirty years, has leaped into popularity with a speed excelling even the commercial rise of the port of Portsmouth. Ryde and Ventnor have been somewhat thrown into the shade by this neighbouring rival, and Ryde has even come to be one of the few towns whose populations have decreased in the last decennial period. They had, however, their own eras of sudden growth. Ventnor celebrated what some people called its jubilee last year; its discoverer in 1841 having been Sir John Clark, who eulogised its merits as a resort for invalids at the time when Madeira rather than Davos was the climate recommended for consumptives. At any rate, Ventnor fifty years since was but a fishing village; it has now 5,800 people, a population which would still form scarcely more than a village in a manufacturing district, but which indicates a good-sized town as watering-places go. Ryde, which is nearly twice as large, has a history running back far into the past; but as a fashionable resort its development belongs to the reign of Queen Victoria, and is very modern compared, say, with Weymouth, which George III. brought into vogue; with Brighton, which was a fishing-village in the days of George II., and owed its rise to the Regent; or with Bath, of which Beau Nash was, socially speaking, the maker. Contrasted with these historic resorts we have mushrooms like St. Anne's-on-Sea, whose population of 2,590 is more than double what it was ten years ago; Morecambe Bay, nearly doubled, and Southend, grown from 8,000 to 12,000 in the same period; Lee-on-the-Solent, born in 1884, and already possessing the inevitable pier, hotel, and villas; Hunstanton, whose first house—an hotel, of course—was built by Mr. Butterfield in 1846; and others in stages yet more infantile, coming down to the prospective site, the staked-out land, and the half-built hotel.

The romance of manufacturing towns which in modern times have achieved greatness, possesses less of personal interest than the story of the watering-places; but it has been in many cases far more sensational. Huge populations have sprung up on the coal-field, and around ironworks and cotton mills, as though, like Minerva, they had but awaited Jove's fiat to stand forth full-grown. It is since the days of the railways that all these swift growths have occurred, though the most remarkable on the list is that of a place still some few miles beyond the railway. The

twin towns of Barry and Cadoxton, on the great South Wales coal-field, show an increase more American than British in its suddenness. Ten years ago they were little villages, with a united population of 494 souls; their population is now over 13,000. Near at hand are Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil. Cardiff has long had a name in history, but its enormous commercial development is a thing almost of to-day, and is greatly owing to the enterprise of the Marquis of Bute. Fifty years ago its population was 10,000, ten years ago 82,000, to-day it is nearly 129,000. Merthyr was only a village when the first railway locomotive—a precursor of No. 1 and the Rocket—was, it is said, run there in 1804; now it has 58,000 inhabitants. Other Welsh towns have likewise made great strides, notably Penarth, Ogmore and Garw, and Newport, the two first-named having doubled themselves in the '81-'91 decade.

Among English manufacturing towns none can boast a more startlingly rapid rise than that of Barrow-in-Furness and Middlesbrough. Barrow was an insignificant hamlet made up of a handful of fishermen's huts, until the discovery of a rich vein of hematite ore some forty years ago transformed it into one of the most important centres of our great iron manufacture. Its population is now 51,000. Where the fishing cobbles were hauled on to the quiet strand there now flares many a huge blast-furnace, fed with hundreds of thousands of tons of ore yearly, while jute works and one of the largest steel-works in England add further, not to the beauty, but to the commercial prosperity of Barrow. The makers of the place as it now is were the late Duke of Devonshire and the Duke of Buccleuch. Middlesbrough began in an even smaller way. Sixty-five years ago a solitary farmhouse stood where furnaces and puddling-mills make the land hideous to-day. Its life was revolutionised by the find, in 1840, of a thick vein of iron in the Cleveland Hills, running from Middlesbrough to Whitby; the Darlington and Stockton Railway was already at hand to help in the work. Iron ship-building and Bolckow and Vaughan's great steel-works came next, and 'Ironopolis' is now an incorporated borough with an M.P. and over 75,000 people, where forty years since there were not as many hundreds.

Everyone has heard of Barrow and Middlesbrough; but there are some towns of very considerable populations scarcely known outside cotton and iron circles, and marked in the smallest letters on all but brand-new maps. Such is Horwich in Lancashire,

which, within the last ten years, has tripled in size, its population having leaped from 3,700 to 12,800. This instance, and that of Barry and Cadoxton already mentioned, afford probably the largest proportionate increase shown by the last census. Another case is that of the small town of Eastleigh, in Hampshire, which has had greatness thrust upon it in the last year or two by the London and South-Western Railway Company transplanting their carriage works thither from Nine Elms; another quarter century or less may find it a second Crewe. Crewe had 51 inhabitants in 1831, 203 in 1841. Then the railway works were established, and in jubilee year had made 3,000 locomotives. The population at present is 30,000.

Nelson, in Lancashire, and Rushden, in Northampton, have both more than doubled in the decade, the former advancing from 10,000 to 22,000, the latter from 3,600 to 7,400; so have the twin towns of Benwell and Fenham, in Northumberland, with at present 10,500 inhabitants; and Walton-on-Naze, with 40,000. St. Helen's owes its rise mainly to the Sankey canal, the first in England, which placed it in touch with the Mersey and the coal-fields; chemical and smelting works add to the insalubrity of its air, which is fatal to green things, but apparently not unfavourable to the development of the human race, 71,000 of whom live there to-day as compared with 5,000 in 1851. At the beginning of the century it was a small hamlet. Wallsend Colliery was opened in 1777, but twenty years ago Wallsend was only a village of 4,000 inhabitants; ten years since it had 6,000; now it has over 11,000. Bootle was quite lately an unimportant village near Liverpool; now it has 49,000 people, having increased from 27,000 in the decade. Wallasey, in Cheshire, Jarrow, Darwen, and Kettering are all towns which have grown greatly in recent years; the oldest of them, Kettering, is now the smallest, the other three have each between 33,000 and 35,000 people. The two Hartlepoons have a curious history, in three parts—ancient, recent, and modern. Hartlepool was a fortified borough in olden times, with a castle and a Norman church; somewhere about eighty years ago it was coming to the front as a bathing-place, there was a chalybeate spring at hand, and lodging-houses were flourishing. Then came the railway, and after that the docks and foundries, and there was an end of fashionable visitors and an influx of puddlers and ship-builders. In 1847 a railway speculator, named Ralph Ward Jackson, began West Hartlepool, and before long West Hartlepool had

bigger foundries and more acres of docks than the old town; now it is just double the size of its elder sister, 13,000 of its 42,000 inhabitants having been added in the last ten years. Somewhat similar, but more marked, is the contrast between the two Swindons. Old Swindon has led a long and eminently prosy life as a little market town. New Swindon was created the other day for the purpose of turning out G.W.R. locomotives. To-day New Swindon is more than five times the size of old, having added 20,000 to its population in twenty years, while Old Swindon has put on only 1,500. Another double town is, or was, that of Stockton-on-Tees and South Stockton on the north and south sides of the river Tees. It is an old place, its history extending back into the time of the Danes, but its modern growth is a thing of the railway, the iron manufacture, and the shipping trade, and in twenty years it leaped from 37,000 to 65,000. In the earlier part of the time the northern Stockton made the running; recently, however, South Stockton has developed at a more rapid rate, though still but a third the size of its neighbour. They share a Member of Parliament, but while the one has rejoiced for some time in a mayor and corporation, the other has been governed till very lately by a local board. South Stockton has now nominally ceased to be, having become one of the newest boroughs in England by its incorporation under the name of Thornaby-on-Tees. Greater general interest may perhaps be felt in the rise of Reading, whose 16,000 people have grown, mainly on biscuits, into 60,000 in fifty years; no patent 'food' can beat this record.

The most remarkable examples of towns which have had greatness thrust upon them are the enormous metropolitan suburbs. Some of these have grown round the nucleus of little old-fashioned rural spots once removed from London by wide stretches of highwaymen-haunted country; others were not towns at all, but quiet meadows and pasture land until the railway and the speculative builder came along. The biggest are the large towns of West Ham, with 204,000 people, and Croydon, with just half that number. Croydon's romance began long ago; West Ham's lies solely in its phenomenal growth. By diligent search behind the roads upon roads of villas which form the Croydon of to-day, may be found its old church, with tombs of many an archbishop and its palace where Queen Bess stayed and worshipped in the private chapel; modern vandals hammered big nails for a dyer's clothes-line into the ancient stonework of the sanctified

edifice, and the old-time Croydon has been superseded by one of trams and railway-stations, which sends ten thousand business men into the City every morning.

The rate of increase in these giant suburbs is, however, outdone by several of the smaller ones, notably by Wood Green and Ealing, which nearly trebled their populations in the '81-'91 decade, standing now at 25,000 and 32,000 instead of 9,000 and 10,000 respectively; Leyton, East Ham, and Willesden, which have more than doubled (27,000-63,000, 10,000-22,000, and 27,000-61,000); Hornsey, which has just succeeded in making twice four out of twice two (22,000-44,000); and Tottenham, which has nearly doubled (36,000-71,000). Wimbledon, Edmonton, Bromley, Chiswick, and Beckenham have also increased by leaps and bounds. Wimbledon and Edmonton are the same size, and have lately increased at precisely the same ratio; forty years ago Edmonton was a considerable town of something like 10,000 inhabitants, with a reputation even apart from John Gilpin, while Wimbledon was not worth a respectable gazetteer's mention. The volunteers made one place, while the other stood almost stationary; now both are growing residential suburbs. Bromley had a nunnery founded by William the Conqueror; Chiswick and Tottenham have fair lineages; but Willesden, with little more than a railway junction as its start in the race, is outstripping them all. Take away the first figure of Leyton's population of 63,000 and you find its ancestor of 1851, a genteel little place with 'an ancient church and handsome houses'; but who has heard of Gray's Thurrock, already four times the size of that old-time Leyton and, if it continue at its present rate of increase, destined to become as overgrown a monster as West Ham? And West Ham is larger than Portsmouth, Hull, or Newcastle-on-Tyne.

These comparisons may give the reader some idea of the rapidity with which the centres of population are shifting, of the growth of urban England, and of the vast changes in the geography and history of our island within living memory.

CHIMES.

'Whether in the world of mammalia, or in the world of animalculæ, the secret of success is the same: that the great devour the small.' . . . 'Love cannot be justly said to be *all* tomfoolery: there is a certain percentage of Life-Elixir discoverable therein.'—*Opinions of the Pandit Chandra Prakāśah.*

I.

Great men and little men;
 Short men and tall;
 Great men have great minds,
 And small men, small;
 Great minds rob little minds,
 All to make a name:
 So great minds get greatest minds—
 And this is FAME.

II.

Rich men and poor men;
 Rags at Riches' door;
 Rich men have rich friends,
 And poor men, poor;
 Rich men live by poverty;
 Poor men live by stealth:
 So rich men get richest men—
 And this is WEALTH.

III.

Pretty maids and plain maids;
 Maidens altogether;
 Pretty maids have pretty ways
 To keep mankind in tether.
 For maids are weak, and men are strong,
 Till Cupid flits above:
 Then *men* are weak, and *maids* are strong—
 And this is LOVE.

THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE AMIABILITY OF LADY WINKFIELD.

OF winter and of discontent all mortals are doomed to take their share. Winter, of course, may be escaped by those who have the means and the inclination to betake themselves to the tropics; but there is a winter in Nice, as the Countess Radna found out when the *mistral* began to blow and when the impossibility of obtaining dry firewood for love or money was brought home to her; while discontent, as everybody knows, will spring up and flourish in any climate. Now, to be discontented was nothing new to her. From her earliest childhood she had never been anything else—unless, indeed, it might have been during that too brief period when she had deluded herself into the belief that Douglas Colborne was the lord and master for whom she had longed, to whom she could render implicit obedience, and whose partial mission it was to reduce her chaotic notions, emotions and aspirations to something resembling a coherent and definite standpoint. But Douglas had been found wanting and had been cast aside; she was once more at sea, without rudder or compass; she knew not what port to make for, nor, had she been in possession of that desirable knowledge, would she have had the slightest idea how to utilise it. The sorrows of spoilt children of Fortune have served so often as a theme for moralists that the paradox has lost all its freshness; yet they are quite as genuine, quite as common and quite as much entitled to sympathy as the sorrows of the poor, the sick and the maimed. Many a lazy beggar, stretching out his bare legs in the sunshine and the dust at her gates, was a more enviable being than the wealthy Countess who day after day aired her incurable weariness in the well-kept gardens above his head.

Such being her condition of mind, it may seem natural enough to assume that the gossips of Nice were not very far out

in forming the conclusions which they did not fail to form when they noted that the Marchese di Leonforte's afternoon drive took him, fully nine times out of every ten, to the villa occupied by the Countess Radna. But the gossips, whose conclusions are so frequently correct, and who in this instance had more plausible reasons than they were aware of for drawing the conclusions at which they had arrived, were mistaken. They would have been bitterly disappointed if they could have overheard the prolonged conversations which took place between the Countess and her Italian admirer, for in them there was little or no question of love, nor were the limits of propriety overstepped for a single moment. The Marchese, it is true, was an admirer and an ardent one; his admiration, or rather adoration, was so thinly veiled that, for all practical purposes, it might as well have been openly avowed; but he was debarred from openly avowing it by the precepts of a religion in which he firmly believed and which he recognised as binding upon him; while she, on her side, was protected by the dictates of a system of morality which governed her actions, although she could have given no lucid explanation of it. Christianity might be a superstition; marriage might be a contract of neither greater nor less validity than the lease of a house; but—whatever might be the real meaning of them—there were such things as right and wrong, self-respect and self-contempt, and if she had felt inclined to respond in any degree to Leonforte's passion she would, doubtless, have dismissed him instantly and unhesitatingly.

Her code of morality did not, however, render it incumbent upon her to dismiss him for his own sake. Scores of men had been desperately in love with her before him; she had watched the waxing and the waning of their affections; she was convinced that fidelity is a form of strength or weakness which belongs exclusively to the female sex, and she did not believe that the sufferings to which he obviously imagined himself to be a prey would do him any sort of harm. Meanwhile, he always interested and sometimes diverted her. He was, as the men of his nation not unfrequently are, a strange and scarcely comprehensible compound. In some respects he seemed to be a mere child; in others he exhibited himself as a full-grown man, who half frightened her by his terrible earnestness. He had moods of dignified self-control, alternating oddly with fits of excitement, during which it was necessary to ignore two-thirds of the in-

discreet sayings which escaped his lips. His indiscretions, however, did not take the shape which they might have been expected to take; he never forgot that his companion was a married woman, nor did he ever attempt to address her as one who had shaken off the trammels of wedded existence; but he was evidently unable to conceive that both she and her husband might be in the right, and, since he had decided that she had right on her side, he occasionally spoke of Douglas Colborne in terms which, had they been reported to the mother of that comparatively innocent gentleman, would have caused her some justifiable alarm.

The Countess, as has been said, ignored such outbreaks and did not trouble herself to take up the cudgels on behalf of the absent offender. By her way of thinking, Douglas was an unpardonable offender, and it would have been rather too tedious a process to explain to this primitive Marchese how and why he was not a downright monster. Besides, he was absent—a circumstance which not only rendered it superfluous to undertake his defence, but also preserved him from the risk of being eaten up, body and bones, by an impetuous Sicilian. Not for one instant would she have admitted that his absence was just what caused her to regard him as unpardonable; she was very far indeed from imagining that she was furious with him for having neither pursued her nor written to her. Only she deemed that her skin-deep cynicism and scepticism received all the support that was required to keep them alive from the ascertained fact that a man who, not so very long ago, had professed to love her more than anything and everything in the world, could resign himself with scarcely the semblance of a struggle to being deserted by her, and could go on leading his own life as composedly as though she had never been born to interrupt the even tenor of it. Thus it was that Mrs. Colborne's letter, describing the distinction acquired by Douglas in the legislative assembly of his native land, produced an effect altogether different from that which the ingenuous writer had hoped for. The Countess, after perusing her mother-in-law's artless composition, was so vexed and irritated that she could not deny herself the satisfaction of imparting its contents to Leonforte.

'Would one not say,' she exclaimed, 'that these good people expected me to join in their infantine exultation? Yet they might surely have guessed how absolutely it is the same thing to

me whether Mr. Brown or Mr. Jones has a majority in the English House of Commons, and how very little it is any affair of mine whether my husband supports Mr. Jones or annihilates him !'

The Marchese ground his teeth and answered : ' I should like to make it my affair to remind that husband of yours that he is your husband !'

' You are too kind ; that is the very last thing of which I am anxious to remind him. I ask nothing better than that he should forget it—as indeed he seems to have done. The only annoying part of the business is that civilisation has not yet advanced far enough to make a practical divorce a legal one.'

The Marchese looked grave. ' When civilisation reaches that point,' said he in his deep, deliberate voice, and with that dragging Italian accent of his which somehow lent a certain solemnity to his words, ' it will be upon the verge of falling back into barbarism. I grant you that, in your case, divorce might be permissible, because you have no family ; but one must consider the result of divorce in general. The family is sacred, and God knew what he was about when He ordained that it should be so.'

He raised his hat as he pronounced the words '*Le bone Diou*,' and that simple action atoned for a colloquial method of expressing himself which bordered upon irreverence.

But the Countess, who had never really recovered from the sorrow which had fallen upon her at the time of her baby's death, and who may have been dimly aware that she would never have left her husband if her baby had lived, turned upon him with a gesture of exasperation.

' Do you know,' said she, ' that there are moments when you are insupportable ? There is a crying lack of good taste about you which displays itself in your habit of wearing bright blue neckties and in fifty other ways. Try to cure yourself of it. I admit that you waste your time by aping the *fin de siècle* manner which you sometimes attempt to borrow from your Parisian friends ; but you might at least recognise how grotesquely incongruous it is for a man who has the air of an ennobled brigand to talk like a village curé.'

' Since I have the misfortune to displease you, madame, I will withdraw,' answered Leonforte, rising at once and suiting the action to the word. They had these little disagreements from time to time—disagreements which were invariably followed by a

humble petition for forgiveness on his part and a laughing assurance on hers that she had no cause of quarrel with him. As a matter of fact, she generally ceased to think about him as soon as he was out of sight; and on this occasion she was enabled to dismiss him from her mind all the more rapidly because he had hardly left her when a visitor was announced who proved a good deal more interesting than he had been.

It may perhaps be remembered that the occasion which had struck the Countess as opportune for the severance of her connection with Douglas Colborne had been upon one which he had left her in order to fulfil a political engagement under the roof of his powerful neighbour Lord Winkfield, and that his wife's unceremonious refusal to accompany him had given just umbrage to her would-be hostess. Now, it so happened that Lady Winkfield was not at all a nice old lady, and that she prided herself, as disagreeable and eminently respectable persons of both sexes often do, upon her inveterate disregard of the first principles of Christianity. She was wont to affirm, complacently and truthfully, that she never forgot a slight or an injury, and never allowed an opportunity to slip of paying back in their own coin those who had slighted or injured her, adding, if possible, to this discharge of her debts a trifle extra by way of interest. Therefore it was that, being at Cannes for a month or two, having heard something and guessed more as to the unsatisfactory state of Mr. Colborne's domestic affairs, and having likewise been informed that the Countess Radna was temporarily domiciled at Nice, she did not grudge the trouble of a railway journey for the purpose of calling upon the latter lady and saying a few amiable things to her. She was a tall, spare old woman, with grey hair, a very long nose and thin lips, which wreathed themselves into an acid smile as she held out her hand, remarking that neighbours at home became doubly neighbours when they encountered one another in a foreign land.

'I am only here for a few hours' shopping,' she explained; 'but as soon as I was told that you were in the place I thought I must find time just to run up and see you. I do hope you are feeling better, notwithstanding these bitter winds, which I believe are much worse at Nice than they are at Cannes. Of course you have come south for your health, which, I remember, was causing your husband some uneasiness when he was kind enough to spend a night with us in the country. I can well understand how wretched it must be for you to be separated from him; still health

is the first consideration. Everything must necessarily give way to that.'

Now the Countess was really and truly unwell; she had fretted herself of late into something very nearly resembling an illness, and Dr. Schott, had he been called upon to do so, would willingly have signed a medical certificate to that effect. Consequently, she might have adopted the plea ironically offered to her, and she might possibly have taken this prudent course, had she not detected the irony and despised her visitor. As it was, she saw fit to reply calmly:

'I am enchanted to see you, Lady Winkfield, though I can't pretend to have deserved the pleasure by having anything in the world the matter with me. I came to Nice simply with the hope of amusing myself, and, as my anticipations were not extravagant, I have escaped any profound disappointment. At all events, I am not in the least wretched.'

Lady Winkfield contorted her features into a grimace which was designed to express surprise mingled with regret. 'Oh, I didn't know,' said she, with a marked inflection of chilliness. And then: 'Mr. Colborne has written to you, no doubt, about the great sensation which has been caused by his speech in the House. Everybody says he is the coming man, and, although Lord Winkfield naturally thinks it rather imprudent for so young a member to dictate to his chiefs, he quite admits that the speech was a striking one. To confess the whole truth, we both suspected that it had been inspired by you.'

'I am innocent,' answered the Countess, smiling; 'so innocent that I scarcely know what it is all about. Certainly I know nothing from my husband, who, strange as it may appear to you, has not written to me upon the subject.'

Lady Winkfield looked more concerned than ever. 'Ah,' she murmured; 'then I am afraid it must have been Miss Rowley after all. She has always been ambitious on his behalf, as you know, and I doubt whether her counsels are altogether wise. Notoriety, you see, isn't quite the same thing as power: that is what Lord Winkfield has said all along. I can't help regretting it; but I suppose it is almost inevitable that Mr. Colborne should fall under her influence now that you are away from him.'

'Oh, I should think so,' answered the Countess imperturbably. 'Most of us are under the influence of somebody or something, are we not?—even you yourself, perhaps? I really see no reason

why my husband should not be under the influence of Miss Rowley, *faute de mieux.*'

'Well,' assented Lady Winkfield, with the same air of meditative regret, 'if you speak only of political influence—though even in that respect I should have been inclined to think that his own judgment would have been a safer guide. But, unhappily, people will never believe in platonic friendship, and when a public man openly surrenders his independence to a lady who is not his wife, and with whom he is known to be upon terms of the closest intimacy, unpleasant things are sure to be said. Pray, don't imagine that I attach the slightest importance to idle gossip; I never listen to it and always do all I can to discourage it. Still, it does go on, and I must say that, if I were you, and if my health didn't require me to remain abroad, I should go home without loss of time.'

Lady Winkfield got the snub which she had invited; but she did not mind that, because she perceived that she had likewise attained her object. It was all very well for the Countess to affect indifference and amusement; it was all very well for her to hint, in the politest terms, that there are certain forms of impertinence which hardly merit the honour of a rebuke, and to maintain an animated conversation for ten minutes upon matters of a less personal description; but the shot had evidently gone straight to its mark all the same, and Lady Winkfield took her leave eventually with the comforting conviction that she had not wasted her time.

The shot had found its mark: such shots invariably do find their mark, which, indeed, is not much more easy to miss than a haystack at twenty paces. The Countess might have ceased to love her husband; she might have discovered that he was not at all what she had once imagined him to be, and she might have no intention, however remote, of submitting herself again to his authority; but, since she was a woman, she could not possibly help being furious with him for having ceased to love her, and still more furious with him for having found such speedy consolation. That she had foreseen the whole thing did not mend matters: one may foresee a hundred infamies and be none the less disgusted by them when one's prevision is verified. The Countess would have been a shade less disgusted, it may be, if her husband had chosen to avenge himself in some more openly scandalous fashion: what was so intolerable to her was her conviction that he

had not done, and would not do, anything scandalous at all—that he would merely deplore his error in having married the wrong woman, and would never transgress the bounds of that consolatory friendship which brought him into daily contact with the right one. When, on the following morning, Leonforte called to express, as usual, his penitence for having forgotten himself so far as to lose his temper with her, she interrupted him by exclaiming:

‘For Heaven’s sake, don’t apologise on that score! If you had no temper to lose, or if, having one, you could always control it, you would be no better than an Englishman. Every now and then you make me lose mine by grotesquely inappropriate speeches; but when the worst has been said of you that can be said, it must still be acknowledged that you are at least no hypocrite.’

After that, the innate hypocrisy of the Countess’s husband had, of course, to be exposed, and was exposed. The narrator’s irritation was in some measure soothed by the wrath to which her narrative moved her hearer; but she was a little taken aback by the authoritative judgment which that hot-blooded young man ultimately pronounced upon the whole situation.

‘You must be delivered from this despicable fellow,’ said he decisively. ‘Yes; that must certainly be done; and, if I am not to have the pleasure of shooting him or running him through the body, nothing remains except a divorce. I will contrive it for you; it is not impossible; marriages have been annulled before now by the Holy Father—and I have an uncle who is a Cardinal-Archbishop—’

He did not notice his companion’s irrepressible merriment; he was gazing straight before him, with a frown upon his brow, and had lost sight of the present in his eagerness to forecast the future.

‘Yes,’ he resumed; ‘it is not impossible—not at all impossible—that you may some day be free. And when you are, I may venture—you will allow me, perhaps, to say what I must not say yet—you will allow me to—’

‘I will allow nothing at all,’ interrupted the Countess with a sudden change of mood; ‘I will not even allow you the privilege of meddling with my affairs, which you are so kind as to accept in advance. You exceed every limit of legitimate farce with your Cardinal-Archbishops! Are you really unaware that we live in

the latter part of the nineteenth century and that the law has long ago given up, as a work of supererogation, snapping its fingers at the Church? The English law is tolerably accommodating in the matter of divorce, but it insists upon the proof of certain causes which I should be unable to allege if I wanted a divorce. I do not, however, remember having told you that I wanted one.'

'I ask pardon for my presumption,' returned Leonforte quite humbly; 'but what would you have? I am, as you have so often told me, only half civilised; I have not learnt when to speak and when to be silent. When I know that you do not love this man to whom you are bound, when I know that he does not love you, and that he has insulted you, and when I know that I myself——'

The Countess stopped him with an imperative gesture. 'This is one of the times when you would do better to be silent,' said she. 'You have, perhaps, said a little too much as it is, and if I had not already made up my mind to leave Nice, your remarks would have gone a long way towards making it up for me. Decidedly you are too primitive.'

'You are going to leave Nice!' exclaimed the Marchese in dismay. 'But why?—and where will you go then?'

'The climate does not suit me; Dr. Schott is persuaded that it is doing me more harm than good—that is why. Most likely I shall go to Rome in the first instance; then, perhaps, to the Italian lakes; then to Hungary; and finally to Paris.'

'And what is to become of me after you are gone?'

'You can't expect me to return a positive answer to such a question; but I can give you a negative one. You will not follow me.'

'Is that a command?'

'If you please. Seriously, and to speak in as plain and primitive terms as you could desire, it is necessary for me to exercise a little circumspection. We have been good friends, and, with your permission, we will part good friends. Nothing is more evident to me than that the moment has arrived for us to part. But don't look so sad about it. After all, Monte Carlo remains to you—not to mention ten more good years of youth.'

'Ah,' he ejaculated, 'you don't know me!—you don't know me!'

She knew him well enough to be sorry for him, and she

thought that she also knew him well enough to know that her sorrow was superfluous. An Italian might be more deserving of pity than an Englishman, because an Italian does at least feel for the time being; but northerners and southerners, young and old, civilised and uncivilised, all men were the same, and it was no more worth while to commiserate them than to be angry with them. Nevertheless, it seemed worth while to cheer up this disconsolate member of an inconstant sex by remarking:

‘I shall be in Paris in April or May—Avenue Friedland. But before that time you will probably have forgotten that you went near to fracturing your skull at my door during the winter. Who remembers the details of an illness from which he has recovered?’

If the Marchese di Leonforte did not succeed in convincing his hostess and benefactress that he had an exceptionally tenacious memory, it was not owing to any lack of powerful and picturesque language on his part. He was not altogether despairing when he left her; though, doubtless, he would have been so had he known with what promptitude his eloquence was effaced from the tablets of her memory.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HORRIBLE GALASHIELS CREATURE.

‘REALLY, I can’t help it,’ said Lady Burcote. ‘I’m as economical as I can be, and a great deal more economical than you are; but butchers and grocers and people of that sort must be paid occasionally. Otherwise they might refuse to supply us with food any longer; and you wouldn’t like that, I suppose?’

‘But five hundred pounds all at once!’ remonstrated the lady’s husband. ‘You surely don’t mean to tell me that the household bills reach that figure!’

‘They reach three figures, at all events, and there is always such a bother about getting any money out of you that one doesn’t want to go through it oftener than one can help.’

Lord Burcote sighed heavily, opened the drawer of the writing-table before which he was seated, drew out his cheque-book and scribbled off a cheque for the required amount. He was a small, lean man, slightly underhung and clean shaven, save for a thread

of grey whisker which he wore on either side of his face, like a coachman.

'It's all very fine, Selina,' he remarked, as he handed the slip of paper to the rouged, yellow-haired lady who stood beside him, 'to talk about the difficulty of getting money out of me; but what the deuce is a man to do when he can't get his rents paid, and when he is burdened with such an abominably expensive family?'

'I don't know,' answered Lady Burcote unsympathetically. 'Borrow a trifle from his sons-in-law, I should think.'

'You don't seem to be very well acquainted with my sons-in-law, Selina; though you did take such a lot of trouble to secure them for me. I wish you would secure some nice, rich, open-handed fellow for Florry!'

'I am doing my best. There is young Lord Galashiels, for instance, who is coming to dinner next Thursday, and who is simply rolling in wealth.'

'He is a horrid young cad.'

'Oh, of course. It isn't in the nature of things that he would be rolling in wealth, still less that he would be open-handed with it, if he were anything else. Such as he is, we certainly can't afford to despise him.'

'H'm! Well, I suppose not. Isn't it on Thursday that you have a crush?'

'Yes; after the dinner. Why?'

'Only because Colborne, the young man who is going to upset the coach, asked me if I could get him an invitation for it.'

'Oh, he has been invited already; I sent him a card ten days ago.'

'Yes; but he wants one for a cousin of his—a musical fellow, who sang with Florry somewhere or other and is going to sing with her again at that big charity performance which the Duchess of Brentford is getting up. What was his name? I know I wrote it down. Oh yes; Innes—Frank Innes. Any objection to him?'

Lady Burcote reflected.

'None that I know of,' she answered presently; 'I never heard of him before. If Florry sang with him, it must have been at Peggy Rowley's in the winter, and Peggy is a good deal more particular than the Duchess. Let him come if he wants to come. What address?'

‘I haven’t the slightest idea ; you had better post the card to Colborne.’

Such are the advantages of comparative obscurity and of relationship to a politician whose mind is too much occupied with affairs of State to recall bygone social trivialities. It was only as a forlorn hope that Frank Innes had petitioned his cousin for that invitation, and he had been very agreeably surprised by the readiness with which his request had been acceded to. The fact was that Douglas had completely forgotten the existence of Lady Florence Carey, and had only thought of her father as one of the influential personages with whom he had lately been brought into political contact.

He forwarded the wished-for card to its destination, together with a half-sheet of note-paper, upon which he had hastily scribbled : ‘Here is your ticket of admission to Lady Burcote’s. I shouldn’t think it was worth much more than a sandwich and a glass of inferior champagne, although I am told that everybody is to be there, except myself. From what I hear, I expect I shall have to spend the best part of the night in the House.’

Now it was a matter of no great moment to Frank Innes that he was likely to be debarred from encountering his cousin in Eaton Square, where Lord and Lady Burcote resided, nor did he very much care whether he was destined to encounter everybody else there or not. One person he was quite certain to meet ; and so moderate was his ambition that he asked for nothing more than that delightful certainty. What he did not know, and what he would have been overjoyed if he had known, was that that person was almost as eager to shake hands with him again as he was to shake hands with her. Lady Florence Carey had not gone the length of falling in love with the young man with whom she had had a sort of incipient flirtation some months before, and who had found an excuse for writing her several very prettily worded notes since ; but she liked him, and she was glad to hear that he had taken the trouble to get himself invited to their house. Moreover, she did not at all like Lord Galashiels, whose bride she was well aware that she was fated to become, unless some means could be discovered of choking him off ere he committed himself to a formal proposal.

Lord Galashiels would not, in truth, have struck anybody as a promising candidate for the hand of a beautiful and highly-born

young lady if he had not been Lord Galashiels; but, being what he was, no pretensions could seem too extravagant for him to entertain. His father had been given a baronetcy and then a peerage for reasons which, during the last hundred years, have always been deemed amply sufficient—namely, that Messrs. James Dalziel and Co. had amassed a colossal fortune by strict attention to their business of manufacturing woollen cloth and hosiery. He himself had neither toiled nor spun, there having been no necessity for him to employ his time in that way; but he had been educated at Eton and Christ Church; he had assimilated, not without some measure of success, the tastes and occupations of the aristocracy, and if he did not resemble the lilies of the field in point of beauty, he was upon a footing of absolute equality with them so far as uselessness went. At the age of five-and-twenty he was a thick-set, blunt-featured, red-headed young man, who kept his red hair as closely cropped to his head as the scissors would go, dressed unexceptionably, could just manage to express his ideas, when he had any, intelligibly, rather fancied himself as an athlete, and ate and drank more than an athlete has any business to do. His intelligence had been equal to the discovery that Lady Burcote desired to ensnare him, and his appreciation of Lady Florence's attractions had led him to the conclusion that he might do a great deal worse than allow himself to be ensnared. Consequently he was much better pleased to find himself seated beside the latter lady at her father's dinner-table than she herself was with an arrangement which had cost Lady Burcote no slight exercise of ingenuity.

'So you're going to have a reception this evening, I hear,' said he, addressing his left-hand neighbour as soon as he could decently turn his right shoulder towards the dowager whom he had escorted downstairs. 'Rather slow things, receptions; don't you think so? Why didn't you give us a dance?'

'Because dances cost too much, I suppose,' answered Lady Florence. 'Do you mean to say that you *like* dancing? I should have thought you would have hated it.'

Lord Galashiels had to reflect seriously for several seconds before the possible reason of her having conceived so mistaken an impression dawned upon him. When it did he refrained (for he was of a choleric temperament, and had learnt how foolish it is to lose control over yourself and respond to provocative remarks) from answering that he believed he danced about as well as other

fellows. He only said, with much point and emphasis: 'I like dancing with *you*.'

'Although it is utterly out of my power to make my step fit in with yours? Well, I'm immensely flattered, and very sorry that I can't offer you a chance of treading upon my toes to-night. Duty will keep me at home until bed-time; you, of course, will go on to the Plymouths' ball immediately after dinner.'

Lord Galashiels replied that he had no such intention; and indeed, if the girl had had a little more experience, she would have known that snubs were far more likely to stimulate the ardour of her obnoxious admirer than to extinguish it. Perhaps he was afraid that she did not fully realise how great a sacrifice he was prepared to make for the pleasure of enjoying her society; for he took some trouble to explain that, although Lady Plymouth always did things awfully well, and although several people had begged him to make a point of turning up at the ball, he proposed to disappoint both her ladyship and them. Only a woman of mature years, sharp discernment and ready wit can hope to pierce the heavy armour of self-esteem which protects such dullards as Lord Galashiels; Lady Florence, being devoid of these advantages, could think of nothing better to do than to yawn in his face, and he didn't mind that a bit.

He joined her after dinner, smelling very strongly of tobacco, and clung to her while the rooms began to fill, regardless of her evident inattention to what he was saying. To be sure, he was not saying anything of much importance. He had dined well; he was contented with himself and with the world at large; it did not greatly signify whether she agreed with him or contradicted him, so long as he could remain in close proximity to her and stare her out of countenance. Perhaps he would have been less easily satisfied if he had known why the brown eyes which refused to meet his were so steadily fixed upon the doorway, and perhaps he might even have condescended to be a little bit annoyed had he noticed how those same eyes brightened when a rather good-looking young man shouldered his way at length through the throng in response to a hardly perceptible signal from Lady Florence. He might, if he had been sufficiently on the alert to discern all this, have fancied that Lady Florence was in love with the Mr. Innes whom she was presently good enough to introduce to him; only he would have been quite mistaken in leaping to

that conclusion; so that it was in all respects fortunate that he remained free from any suspicion of the kind.

As for Lady Florence, she hastened to explain candidly to Frank Innes why it was that she had begged him to take her downstairs for a cup of tea.

'I don't want any tea,' said she, 'and you can see for yourself that we might as well try to fly as to make our way into the dining-room in the face of the infuriated rabble which is storming the staircase. I only wanted to escape from that horrible Galashiels creature.'

'Who is the horrible Galashiels creature?' asked Frank.

'Oh, *you* know—blankets, or something of that sort. I am not sure; but I think he is rather stupefied by drink this evening. At all events, he hasn't attempted to follow us; so now we can wriggle into a corner somewhere and talk. I'm so glad you got mamma to send you an invitation. How did you manage it?'

Frank was slightly surprised to hear that Lady Florence knew so little about her mother's hospitable arrangements; but he told her who had procured his invitation for him, and ventured to add that, if he had failed to obtain it through his cousin, he would have moved heaven and earth to obtain it from somebody else.

'I really couldn't have gone on existing in the same city with you without meeting you somehow or somewhere,' he declared. 'I suppose you know that we are going to sing together at the Duchess of Brentford's?'

Lady Florence had been made aware of that pleasing circumstance, and saw no reason why she should not openly avow what pleasure had been afforded to her by the information. With equal *naïveté* she proceeded to inquire: 'What made them ask you? Do you know the Duchess?'

'Never set eyes upon her,' answered the young man; 'but I presume that she must know me by reputation, and when I heard that you were to be one of her troupe I graciously consented to do my little best for her. There was no occasion for her to be as grateful as she professed to be in a note which she kindly addressed to me, because, setting all other considerations aside, I shall gain a pretty good advertisement by appearing in this show. I forget whether I ever told you that I look forward to becoming a professional songster and making my fortune at the trade.'

Lady Florence was much interested. She wanted to know what was the average income of the professional songster; also she had many questions to ask about Mr. Innes's actual position and duties; likewise, she gave him to understand that, if these permitted of his calling some afternoon and coaching her as to the accurate interpretation of the part assigned to her in the Duchess of Brentford's projected operatic comedy, she would be very pleased indeed to see him.

'Only,' she observed at the conclusion of a somewhat prolonged dialogue, 'you will have to make friends with mamma first. You have been introduced to her, I suppose?'

Frank confessed that he had not as yet been so far favoured; whereupon Lady Florence promptly led him off to repair the omission. There was some trouble about finding Lady Burcote, who was at length discovered in a dim recess, relating piquant anecdotes behind her fan to an elderly gentleman with a waxed and dyed moustache; but there was less trouble than might have been anticipated about obtaining her consent to Mr. Innes's looking in any day and going through an informal rehearsal with her daughter. Lady Burcote knew when to be strict and when to be lenient; a mere glance enabled her to classify this youth and to place him upon the list of harmless impossibilities. Moreover, he was a good-looking youth, and she retained a personal partiality for youth and good looks.

'We are at home on Thursdays,' she remarked; 'so don't trouble to come on a Thursday. Any other evening, between six and seven, we shall be delighted. Florry dear, I wish you would look for Lord Galashiels and tell him not to go away without saying good-night to me. I quite forgot to arrange with him about Hurlingham.'

As Lady Burcote now retreated once more behind the shelter of her fan and resumed her interrupted colloquy, Frank felt free to join in Lady Florence's search for the missing nobleman, of whose pretensions he had begun to get an inkling.

'Didn't you say,' he ventured to inquire, 'that you suspected the man of having drunk rather more than was good for him? You oughtn't to go near him, you know, if he is in that condition. I'll hunt him up and deliver your mother's message.'

'Drunk or sober,' returned Lady Florence as calmly as if she had been making the most ordinary observation in the world, 'I mustn't shirk him. Mamma is in one of her good humours to-

night, and if you lived in this house you would know how very important it is to keep her in a good humour. All sorts of things may ruffle her; but the one thing which is always quite certain to ruffle her is disobedience.'

'Is it an article of your creed to obey her always and under all circumstances?' inquired Frank, meaning a little more than he said, and desiring the girl (for, indeed, false modesty was not one of his failings) to understand that he meant a little more.

She understood him perfectly well, and she answered, with a sudden access of gravity: 'Yes, we have been brought up in that way. Most likely it is for our good. There is Lord Galashiels, looking as cross as a bear; I had better go and smooth him down, and you had better not come with me, please. I think, if you can come on Saturday, you will be almost sure to find me in, and then we can run through the music.'

She was gone before he had time to make any rejoinder; nor, indeed, was he particularly eager to make one. He had been introduced to Lady Burcote; the *entrée* had been accorded to him, and he had been pretty plainly told that he was expected to take advantage of his privileges: that was not such a bad evening's work, he thought. His self-congratulations, however, were somewhat rudely interrupted when, on his way towards the door, he found himself face to face with Peggy Rowley, who accosted him with the uncomplimentary apostrophe of: 'Oh, you disastrous donkey!'

'Thank you,' he responded meekly; 'no doubt I am all that you call me. Why, though?—if one may ask.'

'One may ask,' returned Peggy, 'and one shall be answered, if one insists upon it. Only a donkey courts disaster by plunging head first over a precipice while his best friends have done all they could to hang on to his tail up to the last moment. Your young woman is going to marry Lord Galashiels, and even if she were not, she certainly wouldn't be going to marry you. I told you how it would be; I'm not a bit sorry for you. Which of your brother donkeys was so stupid and unfeeling as to bring you here to-night?'

'Nobody brought me: it was Douglas who got me an invitation.'

'Then he ought to be ashamed of himself. Perhaps it is because he is ashamed of himself that he doesn't show his face here. That shall not prevent me from letting him know what I think of him, though.'

'Dear Miss Rowley, I am sure you wouldn't be so ill-natured as to stir up additional troubles for me. You know very well that I am dreadfully in earnest, and that I shall have troubles enough to face before I can begin to see daylight. Is it really true that they want to marry her to Lord Galashiels?'

'Of course it is true; they have as good as announced it. And let me tell you, young man, that your dreadful earnestness will get no sort of support or encouragement from me. Don't flatter yourself that I can't see through you. It would be very convenient if I were to ask Florence to tea with me every now and then, and if you were to happen to drop in while she was there, wouldn't it?'

'It would be very nice,' answered Frank. He added, after a moment: 'She hates him, you know.'

'Oh, indeed!—you have ascertained that much? Well, then, she had better refuse him and elope with you. Only she won't refuse him, and she won't elope with you. Moreover, she won't come to tea with me, because she won't be asked.'

'At least,' pleaded Frank, 'you might remain benevolently neutral.'

'Perhaps I shall; it will depend upon circumstances. Meanwhile, if you were as dreadfully in earnest as you pretend to be, you would run away. But it takes courage to run away, and nothing convinces me that you are abnormally constant or abnormally courageous.'

Whatever other qualities he may have possessed or lacked, he must, at all events, have been blessed with rather more intelligence than the average young man; for he left the house with a very strong impression upon his mind that he had secured an ally in Peggy Rowley.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RIVAL RUNNERS.

FRANK INNES ought to have known a great deal better than to suppose that a sensible woman like Miss Rowley could ever become his open or active ally in an enterprise so preposterous as that of his winning Lady Florence Carey for his bride; still it was to the credit of his intuitive sagacity that he had been able to divine, in spite of her discouraging language, a subdued inclination on

her part to back him up. The truth was that Peggy, in common with all the best of her sex, was at heart romantic, and could not possibly help sympathising with the poverty-stricken young lover in that ever-recurring drama which has for its remaining personages a fair maiden, a pair of worldly parents and an unattractive, eligible suitor. At the same time she was fully minded to keep her sympathy to herself, and doubtless she would have done so had it not been for the violent animosity which it was the misfortune of Lord Galashiels to arouse against himself in her breast.

‘Oh, if it is any satisfaction to you to know that I can’t stand the man, you are welcome to that satisfactory knowledge,’ she said to Frank some weeks later. ‘He is a swaggering cad; he has a nasty, sulky temper; he is ugly; he is stupid; he is anything you like. Nevertheless, there is no blinking the lamentable fact that he can give you a long start and a beating.’

‘So he seems to think,’ observed Frank. ‘He has offered to run me a hundred, two hundred, and three hundred yards, and to back himself at two to one for any amount I like to name.’

‘Has he really?’ asked Peggy with some animation. ‘But surely you ought to be able to get away from him! Why, he’s as fat as a pig and the colour of an orange!’

‘Oh, of course he isn’t in condition—nor am I, for that matter—but I believe he can run. All the same, I shouldn’t mind taking him up, if we could arrange a little friendly meeting somewhere or other about Easter. The difficulty is to find a place suitable for the purpose.’

Peggy burst out laughing. ‘Naturally,’ said she, ‘you can’t be aware that Florence Carey has promised to spend Easter with me at Swinford, and I suppose such an idea never entered your head as that Lord Galashiels might also be my guest, much less that Peter Chervil might be induced to measure out a course in the park for a possible athletic contest. Now, look here, young man: you may come if you like, only you must be good enough to begin training this very moment, and unless you win every one of the three events I’ll be the death of you! Don’t misunderstand me; I told you before, and I tell you again, that you haven’t the ghost of a chance against him in other respects. It is for Florence’s sake, not for yours, that I want Lord Galashiels to be discomfited. I shall be delighted if she can summon up courage to send him about his business; I should be very far from being delighted if she were to dream of regarding you as his substitute.

But it is really inconceivable that she should indulge in such dreams as that; so I feel no scruple about employing you as a cat's-paw, subject to your consent. Do you consent? I wouldn't if I were you.'

By the time that this colloquy took place a good many things had happened. Frank and Lady Florence had met frequently and had rehearsed their parts together, with the full consent of Lady Burcote, who considered the young amateur to be *omni suspicione minor*; a dull dawning of jealousy had begun to illumine the muddy mind of Lord Galashiels; while, as for Miss Rowley, it had become evident to her that she was at least not bound to exercise a greater degree of discretion than was deemed necessary by the parents of his lordship's destined bride. Moreover, she abhorred Lord Galashiels.

Consequently, she said no more than has been recorded above to dissuade Frank Innes from profiting by an invitation which he had virtually asked for, nor did she see the slightest harm in hoping with all her heart that he would prove the victor in the coming strife. 'I shall speak to Lady Burcote about it, so that nobody will be able to accuse me of underhand conduct,' she reflected, by way of setting herself perfectly straight with her conscience. A similar praiseworthy motive prompted her to invite Douglas Colborne to spend the Easter recess under her roof. If Lord and Lady Burcote were responsible for their daughter, Mr. Colborne might be held more or less responsible for his cousin. In any case, no responsibility could fairly be laid upon her shoulders.

Douglas, however, was compelled to decline his neighbour's alluring offer. There was to be no rest for him that Easter, he told her; he had undertaken to address several meetings in the North of England; after which he would be due at the house of a Cabinet Minister, whose invitation was almost equivalent to a command.

'In other words,' observed Peggy, laughing, 'you are becoming much too sublime a personage to waste your time upon the likes of us. Go your way, then, and prosper. All I beg of you is that you won't allow yourself to be insidiously lured to your ruin by accepting the Chief Secretaryship for Ireland. Whatever you do, bear in mind always that your friends desire nothing more ardently just at present than to destroy your reputation.'

This, of course, was meant as a joke, and taken as such; yet

there was a spice of earnestness beneath it. The eyes of many persons not less quick-sighted than Miss Rowley were watching the development of Douglas Colborne's career, and not all of them were as benevolently disposed towards him as she was. Peggy, who flattered herself that she knew the tricks of the game, was divided between admiration of his independent attitude and fears lest he should either grow too independent to be tolerated or else submit, in an unguarded moment, to be muzzled by taking the subordinate office which, she felt pretty sure, would be offered to him as soon as a vacancy occurred. She did not meet him very often—he had little leisure for social intercourse—but every now and then they had talks together which he gradually came to anticipate and to look back upon as the brightest incidents in his present busy life. Peggy's shrewdness and kindliness and her quick comprehension of his ideas were delightful to him; it was very pleasant to know that she was not only ambitious on his behalf, but perfectly understood how free he was from ambition in any bad sense of the term. In a word, she was his best friend—perhaps his only real friend—and he sometimes thought to himself, with a smile and a sigh, that the lamentations of Loo were as excusable as lamentations ever are. No doubt it was a pity that he couldn't have fallen in love with Peggy Rowley and she with him; no doubt, too, it was a pity that he had not managed to retain the love, or even the friendship, of his wife. But he was too much preoccupied with work and engagements of various kinds to linger over thoughts like these—too much preoccupied also to trouble himself greatly about Frank Innes, whose classic method of pitting himself against a rival suitor struck him as more comic than serious.

Now it would be affirming rather too much to say that Frank himself expected Lady Florence to bestow either her heart or her hand upon the successful competitor in three foot-races; but he was very serious indeed in his determination to win each and all of those contests; and when—all preliminary arrangements having been satisfactorily concluded—the time came for him to encounter his antagonist, he was about as fit for the trial of speed as he could be made.

Peggy had got together a rather numerous and very merry house-party. In the programme of the amusements provided for her guests she had been careful not to assign too prominent a place to the amicable struggle between Lord Galashiels and Mr.

Innes; but she meant them all to witness it, and she had likewise made some casual efforts to enlist their sympathies on Frank's side. That much could, in fact, have been accomplished without any effort at all; for Lord Galashiels was not popular.

It ought not to be beyond the capacity of a disinterested looker-on to sympathise with any actor in the varying yet monotonous human comedy, so that some faint sympathy may possibly be felt for a red-haired young man of vast possessions who fondly imagined that he had only to wish for a thing in order to obtain it. It was scarcely Lord Galashiels' fault that he was the victim of a delusion not uncommon amongst men of vast possessions; he had, after due consideration, finally made up his mind that he wished to marry Lady Florence Carey; and he naturally did not suppose that his power to run a little faster than a Government clerk would affect his chances with her one way or the other. Nevertheless, he intended to exercise a power of which he entertained no doubt (for he had been a brilliant performer during his University career, and Frank Innes had latterly become a bore to him), and so confident was he as to results that he had not taken the trouble to go through any strict process of preparation.

The consequence was that he was beaten with almost ridiculous ease at all three distances, and that he was scarcely less amazed by his own defeat than by the noisy and unanimous applause which greeted his successful rival. It must, however, be said for him that he accepted his triple defeat in a sportsmanlike spirit and paid up his forfeited stake with equal promptitude and good humour.

'Serves me right for being so cock-sure,' he remarked to Lady Florence Carey, whom he joined after the spectators had dispersed and were strolling away in knots of twos and threes across the sunlit undulations of the park. 'One doesn't expect a singing fellow to be a running fellow, you know. I could have polished him off without much trouble if I had known that he had ever been taught how to move his legs.'

'Hadn't you better try again, then?' suggested the girl. 'I dare say he will be happy to oblige you. At all events, I wouldn't brag of what I could do until I had done it if I were you.'

'I wasn't bragging; I was simply stating a fact,' returned Lord Galashiels, who, as has been mentioned before, had a temper, and who did not quite like her tone. 'The fact of the matter is,' he

added, 'that your friend is a bit too bumptious to suit me, and if I could have taken some of the conceit out of him I shouldn't have been sorry.'

'He doesn't seem to have taken the conceit out of you,' remarked Lady Florence.

'Bless your soul, I'm not conceited! I know what I can do when I'm in training, that's all; and I quite admit that I was an ass not to train. I'll tell you what it is, Lady Florence,' continued Lord Galashiels with the air of one who is strong enough to afford occasional admissions of weakness, 'I believe I only wanted to take that fellow down a peg or two because he has a habit of being so confoundedly in the way. It's rather a nuisance, don't you see, to find him howling and screeching at the piano every time one goes to Eaton Square in the hope of getting a quiet chat with you.'

'Is it really?' asked Lady Florence, turning her eyes on those of her companion, which she had hitherto resolutely refused to meet. 'Then, if I can secure him, he shall howl and screech as often and as long as he has breath to do it. Judging by his performance to-day, his lungs are tolerably sound, and as far as quiet chats go, I trust I may say without offence that I would rather chat quietly with him than with you.'

That assertion was undoubtedly designed to give offence, but nothing was further from the intention of the speaker than to provoke the rejoinder which immediately ensued.

'If you mean what you say,' retorted Lord Galashiels sharply, 'I'll be off like a shot; I'm sure I don't want to thrust myself upon anybody who prefers my room to my company. But you don't mean it,' he went on in milder accents; 'you must know very well why I don't enjoy seeing you talk to other fellows, even if they are only amateur actors, like Innes, and perhaps the best plan is to put the extinguisher upon such little worries once for all. Lady Florence, I love you, and I want you to be my wife, if you'll have me.'

The tone in which the above plain declaration was enunciated was inimitable and indescribable. King Cophetua, stepping down from his throne to meet the barefooted beggar-maid, could not have been more gracefully deferential or more condescendingly confident than was this absurd result of wool and cotton as he proffered a share in his affections and his money-bags to the representative of some of the oldest blood in England. The humour of the situation was not altogether lost upon Lady

Florence ; but she was prevented from laughing at it, first by surprise, secondly by alarm, and thirdly by anger. Probably it was the latter emotion which gave her courage to refuse Lord Galashiels in language devoid of the faintest ambiguity. It wasn't worth while to give him all her reasons, she said ; but he might take her word for it that she couldn't possibly marry him, and she hoped that, if he was bent upon marrying, he would look out for somebody else.

He was completely taken aback. At first he was incredulous ; then he in his turn became angry and accused her of playing fast and loose with him ; finally, he declared that, upon his word and honour, he believed she had taken a fancy to that singing beggar, who hadn't a sixpence to jingle on a milestone. But this, of course, was only a picturesque hyperbole ; Lord Galashiels would never have seriously pledged his word and honour to an assertion so far removed from verisimilitude, nor did Lady Florence's dignified retort that she must decline to answer wanton insults strike him as a subterfuge. Although he professed to be deeply wounded, and although, when they parted at the door of the house, he assured her that she would not be troubled by any renewal of attentions which were apparently unwelcome to her, he quite meant to give her another chance, and was fully persuaded that she would be grateful for it. The best of us are apt occasionally to affect a humility which we do not mean to be interpreted in a strictly literal sense, and how, in the name of reason, could a Lord Galashiels imagine himself dismissed by any sane woman for the sake of a Frank Innes ?

But Lady Florence was as serious as possible, and was not a little scared at what she had done into the bargain. She could not resist confessing her sin, before the dinner hour, to her hostess, who whistled and said :

'All things considered, my dear, I think you had better go home. I shouldn't care to be in your shoes ; still, I suppose you know what you are about.'

'How horrid you are !' exclaimed Lady Florence, who had not expected to be met with so glaring an absence of sympathy. 'As if you hadn't arranged those races on purpose ! And as if you hadn't been just as glad as I was to see that beast beaten !'

'Oh, come !' returned Peggy ; 'let us try to stick to the truth, whatever we do. It wasn't I who arranged the races, though I won't deny that I was glad to witness the beating of the

beast. I'll go farther, and admit that I'm glad to hear of the defeat of the beast by the beauty. Only there, if you please, I must draw the line. I'm not a fairy godmother; I can't convert beggars into princes; I'm not even certain that I would if I could; and I'm perfectly certain that I don't wish to face your dear mother in her tantrums. As for Mr. Innes, he has fulfilled his mission, and he will quit this hospitable mansion in good time to catch the up express to-morrow morning. Don't you fall into the unpardonable error of mistaking me for a sentimental idiot.'

This was all very fine; but Peggy Rowley was no more capable of leaving a distressed friend in the lurch than she was of underhand dealing; so that, before Lady Florence was dismissed to encounter her justly incensed parents, certain confidences had been exchanged and certain counsels offered which, if Lady Burcote could have overheard them, would doubtless have sufficed to provoke that lady into a fit of 'tantrums.'

Frank Innes, for his part, obtained neither confidences nor counsels. He was merely told that he had been a good boy, that he had done all that had been required of him, and that he might either leave on the following morning or stay on for another week, just as he pleased, since Lady Florence's visit was about to terminate.

'May I see her before she goes?' asked the young man meekly.

'Certainly not, if by seeing her you mean seeing her alone,' answered Peggy. 'In fact, I shall take very good care that you don't. I am amazed at your impudence in making such a request. All the same, I may as well tell you what you have already guessed, that she has refused Lord Galashiels this time. Now go away and crow, if you want to crow. Goodness knows, you haven't much to crow about!'

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRANK'S FRIENDS STAND ASIDE.

It is manifestly absurd on the part of any hostess to declare that she will not permit such a thing as a private interview between two of her guests. How on earth is she to prevent it, except by sticking like a leech to one of them from breakfast-time till bed-time?—and how can she do that, when she is compelled, as she

naturally must be, to give up a good half-hour out of every morning to necessary consultations with the housekeeper? Frank Innes might, no doubt, have been packed off to London by the early express; but, since that precaution had been omitted (and it is difficult to believe that the omission was wholly accidental), what else could be expected of him than that, instead of accompanying the other men into the smoking-room after breakfast on the ensuing day, he should profit by Peggy's enforced attention to domestic duties to follow Lady Florence into the garden, whither she had strayed all by herself? He caught her up in a grassy alley, shut in on either side by high hedges of privet, and opened the conversation with the remark:

'I'm so awfully sorry to hear that you are going to desert us.'

'I'm awfully sorry to have to go,' replied the girl composedly, 'and my parents will be awfully sorry to see me, because they thought I should stay on here until it was time for us all to return to London. However, there's no help for it.'

Frank lighted a cigarette and scrutinised his companion from beneath his eyelids while he was doing so. At length he made up his mind to be bold, and said: 'I know why you're going; I've heard all about it; I needn't tell you that I'm delighted. All the same, I don't see why *his* departure shouldn't answer all the purpose, and he means to depart at 12.30. He told us so last night.'

'Are you sure he said 12.30?' asked Lady Florence. 'I sincerely trust he did; because the 12.30 is an up train. I'm going down the line, and my train starts ten minutes later. Heaven forbid that I should run the risk of a railway journey with him!'

Frank was able to reassure her. Lord Galashiels was certainly bound for London: he had mentioned in the smoking-room that he intended honouring a sale at Tattersall's by his presence on the morrow.

'That's a comfort, as far as it goes,' observed Lady Florence with a sigh of relief. 'I want all the comfort that I can get, I assure you! I suppose your intentions are amiable when you say you are delighted to hear what I have done; but you little know the delightful experiences that I have let myself in for! Oh, what luck it is to be born a man!'

'Well, in some ways perhaps it is,' Frank was liberal enough to admit; 'still, life isn't all beer and skittles for men, especially

when they are poor men. Goodness knows *I* have troubles enough, and want any comfort that's going! I won't be so ungrateful as to deny, though, that it is a huge crumb of comfort to me to know that you won't be bothered any more by that red-headed lout.'

'Thank you; but I'm not at all sure that I shan't be bothered any more by him. The only thing that I am pretty sure of—but, upon second thoughts, I'm not really sure of anything. We won't talk about it, please.'

'I'm sure of something,' remarked Frank, meditatively and ruefully; 'only I suppose I mustn't talk about that either.'

Lady Florence opined that he had much better not: it was always better to avoid unpleasant subjects, she sensibly observed. The only difficulty was that the banishment of subjects with which the minds of both of them were filled did not leave them very much to talk about, and a rather prolonged period of silence supervened. It was Lady Florence who broke this at length by saying that she must go indoors and tell her maid to pack. She added, with that queer mixture of worldly wisdom and *naïveté* which was characteristic of her:

'I hope you'll be so kind as to keep this to yourself. I suppose Miss Rowley must have told you, and I don't mind your having heard; but one never knows what may happen, and if, by any chance, I should have to marry Lord Galashiels after all, I shouldn't want it to have been published abroad that I had kicked at starting.'

'Of course I shan't breathe a word about the matter to anybody except Miss Rowley,' replied Frank. 'But—but you surely wouldn't marry him now, would you?'

'Oh, not for choice,' answered the girl, laughing a little as she moved away. 'There isn't a great deal of picking and choosing allowed in our family, though. So much the better for us, I dare say.'

He obtained no more explicit intimation of her intentions than that from her, for at this juncture Peggy suddenly appeared upon the scene, and, taking Lady Florence by the arm, led her off towards the house at a smart pace; but perhaps enough had been said. Anyhow, Frank was neither dissatisfied nor despondent when, shortly afterwards, he was permitted to bid the girl whom he loved farewell, and when she was pleased to say that she hoped to meet him again in London ere long. A slight grimace and a

shrug of her shoulders, as she seated herself in the brougham which was waiting for her, helped to convince him that he was at least in her confidence and that she did not object to his enjoying that privilege. Very likely she didn't care for him; still it was some comfort to feel certain that she did not as yet care for anybody else. Lord Galashiels had preceded her to the station in a dogcart and she had not happened to be downstairs at the moment of his departure.

'I hope and trust that the trains will be punctual,' said Peggy in an undertone as she and Frank stood, side by side, gazing after the brougham. 'It would be a little awkward for them both if they were to meet upon the platform; though, to be sure, they ought by rights to have two lines of railway between them. Perhaps Florry may be trusted to take care that the company's bye-laws are not infringed.'

'What *I* hope and trust,' returned the young man, 'is that she will take care to keep something much more impassable than a double line of rails between herself and him for the future. All the same, I'm afraid she is going to have a rough time of it with her people.'

'There can't be the shadow of a doubt as to that,' said Peggy gravely; 'but I don't pity her. She will live to thank me for having preserved her from Lord Galashiels, and you will probably live to reproach me for having utilised you as a means towards an end which won't be quite what you expect it to be. My conscience is at ease, however; I told you plainly that I proposed to employ you as a cat's-paw, and you accepted the position of your own free will.'

Whether the latter part of Miss Rowley's prophecy was fulfilled or not will be discovered by those who take sufficient interest in the present narrative to follow it to its end; but the former portion was hardly so much a prophecy as the statement of an obvious fact. Lady Burcote could not very well be kept in ignorance of her daughter's contumacy; and contumacy was precisely the vice—some ill-natured people said almost the only vice—which Lady Burcote's daughters had never been suffered to exhibit. Poor Lady Florence had no thought of deceiving her mother; she was well aware that the thing couldn't be done; and when, in fear and trembling, she embraced that redoubtable lady, who was staying at a country house in Wiltshire, whither it had been arranged that she herself should proceed on the termination

of her visit to Miss Rowley, she did not attempt to beat about the bush, but blurted out at once :

‘Mamma, Lord Galashiels has asked me to marry him, and I have told him that I won’t.’

Who does not know the terrible power of unscrupulous old women? Even the scrupulous ones are not altogether to be despised as antagonists; but when they have managed, as a tolerably large number of them do, to emancipate themselves from all the restraining influences of mercy and pity, they are very apt to sweep everybody and everything away from the path which they have determined to tread. Now, Lady Burcote had determined that Lord Galashiels should become her son-in-law, and Lady Florence had no weapon to fight her with save that of silent, passive resistance. The weapon is not intrinsically a bad one, and has often been employed with success; but, of course, nobody has ever gained a victory by wielding it, and at the conclusion of an encounter which left Lady Florence in a state of moral collapse, she could only find one circumstance upon which to congratulate herself—namely, that Mr. Innes had not been once mentioned during the course of it. Apparently he was too insignificant to be regarded as a possible cause for her irrational and undutiful conduct.

But was he the cause thereof? That was the question which she put to herself while she was dressing for dinner, and she could only assure her conscience, in reply, that it didn’t in the least matter if he was. Certainly he was much better looking, much better mannered, much nicer in every way than Lord Galashiels; but, since he was a poor man, he was virtually non-existent; so that there could not be the slightest harm or risk in recognising the attractions which he possessed. She, therefore, permitted herself to think about him, to rejoice that there was no likelihood of his being peremptorily banished from her society, and even to regret that his father was not a wealthy Scotch manufacturer, instead of being a penurious Scotch laird.

With her own father, who took her gently to task on the morrow, she had not much trouble. Lord Burcote, like the majority of thoroughly selfish men, was good-natured; his children were not afraid of him, nor was he wont to deal with them in a tyrannical spirit; only—as he did not fail to point out to Florence after a few mild remonstrances—he really couldn’t help it if it was a matter of sheer necessity for his daughters to marry rich men. Galashiels might not be precisely one’s ideal of a *proux*

chevalier, but, after all, he was quite decent—quite presentable. ‘And you know, my dear girl, it really doesn’t do to be too con-foundedly particular; added to which, there are your mother’s wishes to be taken into consideration.’

‘Rather!’ returned Lady Florence, laughing. ‘It isn’t by me that mamma’s wishes will ever be left out of consideration—nor by you either, for that matter. It seems funny, though, that one shouldn’t be allowed to choose one’s own husband, doesn’t it?’

Not so funny as it might appear at first sight, Lord Burcote thought. In most countries girls had nothing to say to the question, and in most countries marriages turned out at least as well as they generally do in England. ‘It stands to reason,’ he remarked, ‘that their parents must know a heap of things which they can’t possibly know; and, as for falling in love and all that sort of thing, the honest truth is that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred marriage kills love. Well, then, don’t you see, if you have married a beggar because you were in love with him a year or two years ago, you are apt to wish that you hadn’t been such a fool. Galashiels will always be Galashiels, but his money will always be his money, my dear.’

Lord Burcote was deplorably in the right. His daughter, however, would have been worth a great deal less than she was had his philosophy found any echo in her heart. Her heart was in a dubious condition, and so was her mind—they could scarcely have been otherwise, considering what her training had been; still it was becoming more and evident to her that the step which she had taken towards self-assertion must not be retraced and that there were certain concessions which, advisable as they might be in themselves, were not to be exacted from her by any human being. Frank Innes was, doubtless, impossible; but it did not follow that Lord Galashiels was possible.

The impossibility of Frank Innes as a candidate for Lady Florence Carey’s hand was recognised by nobody more unreservedly than by that cousin of his who, besides entertaining a sincere affection for him, was minded to nominate the young man as his heir-presumptive. Douglas, when he returned to London, heard all about the races in which Lord Galashiels had been so unlucky as to suffer defeat, and was likewise made aware of the preposterous gossip indulged in by some persons who had been his lordship’s fellow-guests at the time. Mrs. Colborne, who was her son’s informant, begged him to say a few words to Frank. It

was such a pity, the good lady observed, that the boy should get himself into trouble of that kind.

‘And, of course,’ she added, ‘he wouldn’t listen to me if I attempted to make him understand what a goose he is. He has a great admiration for you; so perhaps he may believe you when you tell him that he might just as well think of marrying one of the Prince of Wales’s daughters as Lady Florence Carey. It isn’t as if he had the slightest prospect of any sort or kind.’

Douglas was clever enough to divine that this last assertion was meant to be half-interrogative, but he did not think it worth while to make any response to it. Stoke Leighton did not imply opulence; moreover, he himself was a young man in the best of health. Undoubtedly, Frank, whose chances of surviving him were scarcely appreciable, ought to be warned against cherishing insensate dreams. He therefore promised to do his duty to his young cousin, and he would have discharged this duty with less delay—perhaps, also, with more conviction—had he not chanced, on the following evening, to encounter Lady Winkfield at a dinner-party. Lady Winkfield, who was back from the Riviera, had likewise a duty to perform, and she found unalloyed pleasure in the performance of it. Her pleasure was not very skilfully disguised beneath the mask of a sorrowful countenance, but her statements sounded so extremely like facts that it was difficult to dismiss them as mere ill-natured inventions. She was not an imaginative woman; she could hardly have evolved from the depths of her inner consciousness the whole story of the Marchese di Leonforte’s accident and of the sedulous care bestowed upon him by the Countess Radna. That she should place the worst possible construction upon the subsequent intimacy between nurse and patient was, perhaps, no more than might have been expected; but even if she had refrained from embellishing her narrative with details which she declared that it gave her great pain to mention, Douglas would have been able to fill them in for himself. He thanked Lady Winkfield for her interesting information; he did his best to convey to her, in polite language, the impression that she had taken a liberty which he could not condescend to resent openly; he failed as signally as his wife had done under similar circumstances, and he went home with an aching heart.

Calumny would not be half so disastrous a crime as it is, nor would idle women be able to do a quarter of the mischief that they actually accomplish, if truth and falsehood were not so unfortunately and so inextricably entangled. What Douglas said to

himself, and what he was quite reasonable in saying, was that there was nothing on earth to prevent Hélène from falling in love with an Italian marchese or with anybody else. By her way of thinking, she was no longer his wife; she had ceased to belong to him; doubtless she would be both astonished and amused were she to learn that a flirtation or a love affair on her part still retained the power to inflict upon him a sense of outrage and disgrace. And what could he do? Obviously nothing. It would be too ridiculous to scamper off to the South of France and pick a quarrel with a fantastic Sicilian for the purpose of running him through the body or being run through the body by him. Scarcely less ridiculous, and even less dignified, would it be to undertake the same journey, regardless of political engagements, in order to make remonstrances which would either be listened to with laughter or not listened to at all. The only thing to be done was to make the best of political engagements and try not to care. But, for all his efforts, he did care; and he conceived a bitter, silent resentment against the woman who had wrecked his life, which was, somehow, not incompatible with the love which he believed that he still felt for her.

It was, perhaps, a result of the condition of mind thus dimly indicated that, when at length he did find an opportunity of offering sage counsels to Frank, he laid less stress upon the material obstacles by which Lady Florence was protected against the advances of poverty-stricken wooers than upon the essential folly of staking your happiness upon the love of any woman, high or low, rich or poor. There were, he affirmed, so many other objects which a man might seek to attain without wasting his time and without having cause to feel ashamed of himself, even if, in the long run, he should fall short of complete success. Love, after all, was merely an emotion, and a transitory one at the best. Could anything be more insane than to give up the best years of your life to winning the love of a woman who, even if she consented to become your wife, would in all probability weary of you as soon as, if not sooner than, you would weary of her?

‘Although,’ he concluded a long harangue by observing, ‘there isn’t the remotest chance of her ever consenting to become your wife. She will marry the cotton-spinner all right: they always do.’

‘You wouldn’t utter such abominable blasphemies unless you were dying to be contradicted,’ returned Frank, upon whom his cousin’s assumed cynicism produced an effect diametrically opposite to that which it was intended to produce. ‘Don’t I know just as

well as if you had told me so that you would cheerfully chuck up your chance of being made Chancellor of the Exchequer, or First Lord of the Treasury, or whatever it is that you are going to be, to have your wife back again? And you may depend upon it that she will come back, if I have to travel third-class to Nice in order to bring her to her senses. In fact, I won't deny that that is what I should have done before now if I didn't believe that Miss Rowley understands her own sex better than I do. The Countess is no more weary of you than you are of her; I'm quite sure of that. Leave her alone, and she'll come home.'

'My dear boy,' said Douglas, 'you don't know what you are talking about.'

'Don't I? Well, anyhow, I know what I'm talking about when I say that I don't mean to throw up the sponge before I'm beaten.'

Douglas shrugged his shoulders. 'The worst of it is that you are absolutely certain to be beaten.'

'So you say, and so most sensible people would say, I have no doubt. Nevertheless, she has refused Galashiels, and I have a voice which will soon be worth money. Look here, Douglas; I may be doomed to disappointment, but I do hope that my friends will let me go my own way towards disappointment without putting spokes in my wheels. You, at least, ought to sympathise with me, if nobody else does; because you are making yourself quite as miserable about a woman as I am.'

'I don't think I am particularly miserable,' answered Douglas, 'but if I were, my case would still be altogether unlike yours. However, since you have taken the bit between your teeth, perhaps there is nothing better to be done with you than to let you have your head until you bang it against a stone wall. You might get over the wall and find yourself worse off on the other side—who knows?'

Peggy Rowley, when a part of the above conversation was reported to her, gave it as her opinion that her informant was not such a fool as he looked. 'Only,' she added, 'you will be a great fool—a most unpardonable fool—if you tell that young man that you think of making him your heir-presumptive. The advent of an heir-apparent isn't quite out of the question yet, you know.'

'I haven't told him, and I don't mean to tell him,' answered Douglas. 'All the same, if you knew as much as I know, you wouldn't talk as though my wife and I could ever be reconciled.'

(To be continued.)

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GOLD MEDAL. Health Exhibition, London; **HIGHEST AWARD,** Adelaide, 1897.

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		Twenty-one Payments.	Fourteen Payments.	Seven Payments.		
21	£1 16 3	£2 10 6	£3 4 11	£5 10 0	£33 0 1	21
22	1 16 9	2 11 0	3 5 9	5 11 0	33 5 10	22
23	1 17 2	2 11 6	3 6 5	5 12 1	33 11 2	23
24	1 17 7	2 12 1	3 6 11	5 13 1	33 16 5	24
25	1 18 0	2 12 6	3 7 3	5 14 0	34 2 0	25
26	1 18 6	2 13 0	3 7 10	5 14 11	34 8 2	26
27	1 19 2	2 13 6	3 8 7	5 15 11	34 16 1	27
28	1 19 11	2 14 1	3 9 5	5 17 1	35 4 9	28
29	2 0 8	2 14 8	3 10 3	5 18 6	35 14 1	29
*30	2 1 6	2 15 4	3 11 2	6 0 1	36 4 0	*30
31	2 2 6	2 16 2	3 12 1	6 1 10	36 14 6	31
32	2 3 5	2 17 1	3 13 2	6 3 8	37 5 5	32
33	2 4 6	2 18 0	3 14 4	6 5 8	37 17 2	33
34	2 5 7	2 19 0	3 15 7	6 7 9	38 9 7	34
35	2 6 10	3 0 2	3 16 11	6 10 0	39 2 9	35
36	2 8 2	3 1 5	3 18 4	6 12 5	39 16 11	36
37	2 9 8	3 2 9	3 19 11	6 15 0	40 12 4	37
38	2 11 3	3 4 3	4 1 7	6 17 9	41 8 7	38
39	2 12 11	3 5 9	4 3 4	7 0 7	42 5 4	39
†40	2 14 9	3 7 5	4 5 2	7 3 7	43 2 10	†40
41	2 16 8	3 9 2	4 7 2	7 6 8	44 0 11	41
42	2 18 8	3 11 1	4 9 3	7 9 11	44 19 9	42
43	3 0 11	3 13 1	4 11 5	7 13 3	45 19 3	43
44	3 3 3	3 15 3	4 13 10	7 16 9	46 19 7	44
45	3 5 9	3 17 6	4 16 4	8 0 7	48 0 8	45
46	3 8 5	4 0 0	4 19 1	8 4 6	49 2 8	46
47	3 11 5	4 2 8	5 2 1	8 8 8	50 5 8	47
48	3 14 8	4 5 8	5 5 4	8 13 2	51 9 7	48
49	3 18 1	4 8 9	5 8 9	8 17 11	52 14 1	49
50	4 1 7	4 12 1	5 12 4	9 2 10	53 19 3	50
51	4 5 6	4 15 5	5 16 1	9 7 11	55 4 5	51
52	4 9 5	4 18 10	5 19 11	9 13 1	56 9 0	52
53	4 13 5	5 2 5	6 3 11	9 18 3	57 12 11	53
54	4 17 8	5 6 3	6 8 0	10 3 5	58 17 2	54
55	5 1 11	5 10 2	6 12 1	10 8 6	60 0 8	55

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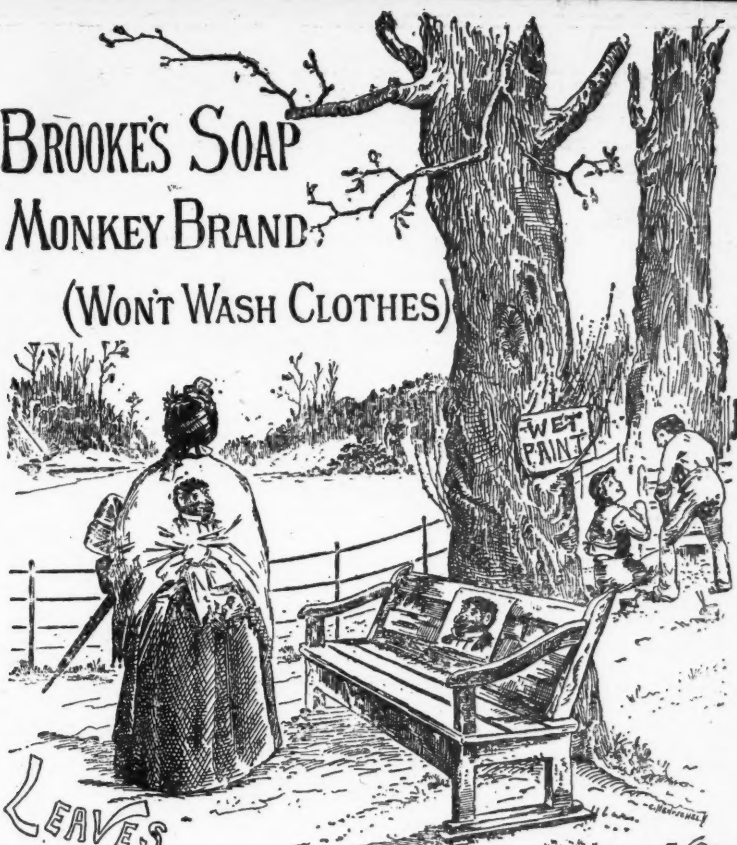
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